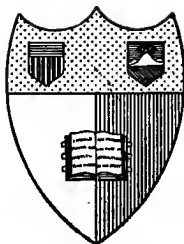


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SOME CONTEMPORARY
POETS (1920)



TO P. T. F. J.
(GREATEST OF CRITICS)

SOME CONTEMPORARY POETS (1920)

BY
HAROLD MONRO

“Swans sing before they die—’twere no bad thing
Should certain persons die before they sing.”

COLERIDGE.

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O vous donc, qui brûlant d'une ardeur périlleuse,
Courez du bel esprit la carrière épineuse,
N'allez pas sur des vers sans fruit vous consumer,
Ni prendre pour génie un amour de rimer ;
Craignez d'un vain plaisir les trompeuses amorces,
Et consultez longtemps votre esprit et vos forces.

BOILEAU.

*First published November 1920.
Leonard Parsons, Ltd.*

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PART I

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

I

It is related of one of our younger poets that he declared he would not publish a First Book until he knew sixteen critics personally, and had dined with each. It is told of another that he prophesied his books would not begin to sell until he had obtained posts for at least a dozen of his friends on the reviewing staffs of prominent newspapers. It has been rumoured that a third was able to dispose of an edition of two thousand copies of his own book solely by means of his own personal recommendation. Verse-writing in the year 1920 is a professional occupation.

Young men and women of education enjoy the practice of making clever rhymes or noting down their own feelings in loose sentences, vaguely termed "free verse." The periodicals and newspapers make a large demand for these exercises in rhyme and rhythm: it is not difficult to be accepted. The left eye of

the young poet must be sharply trained on the main chance. He must be abreast of competitors. He must be constantly *printed* in order that his name may be seen, and remain prominent.

His First Book will be a great event. Every chance will have been considered. He must be talked about, whatever happens. Reviews are not much assistance; unless they be long and confident. They must be such as to make that book an event of the literary season. Twenty thousand people must know about him, whether they read him or not. It is charming to be a well-known young poet: besides, it is of professional value. After all, he has his future to consider, and he must begin here and now to plant its attractive seed.

Early in his career he will have made it his business to gain a technical acquaintance with London literary groups. As soon as he "gets to know" a few people, it will become important that he shall be able to talk to these of Those, the Others he does not know, with a certain intimacy of detail. He will be a master of the important faculty of making

present acquaintances stepping-stones to future ones. He must learn how to joke cynically about the Great, and, if obliged to admit that he has not actually met Mr. H., Mr. N., or Sir S. G., must be able to imply skilfully that he will probably be dining with each of them next week.

All this time, however, he must not cease to "write poetry." It will be well for him soon to attach himself to some group. Thus he may strengthen his position socially, besides intellectually, and be saved the trouble of reading. The Group will pass remarks on books it has *not* read, of which he will pick out the cleverest for his own use. The Group also will teach him quickly to talk extremely cleverly about modern painting. And it will publish a periodical, or anthology, in which his poems will be printed.

His career, step by step, must lead upward. His position shall be made before the verses that might warrant it have been written—that is, in case he may write them. He will visit the country to study in quiet the poets most worthy of imitation, or adaptation. His

acquaintances must know that he is in the country "writing," so that they may expect something of him. Indeed, they must be kept alert for another book. Is he not a young man of promise? Mr. Z. has often said it at dinner to Sir C. S., and yet another gentleman, who now lives in the country but still occasionally visits London, has pronounced him "very swagger."

In the past he has read most of Keats, some Shelley, a little Wordsworth, and a certain amount of Byron. He knows the *Shropshire Lad* rather too well. Walter de la Mare's rhythm also handicaps his freedom. He can understand French, has looked through Baudelaire and Verlaine, and is able to talk with respect of almost any one who wrote, or writes, *vers libre*. He likes Donne, but Chaucer, Milton and Campion he is still meaning to study. Long poems he hates—or imitates.

Here and there, in cursory moments, he has picked up tags of Darwin. These he employs occasionally, in his psychological stuff, as aids to cynicism; with a touch of

Rupert Brooke added they are invaluable to him. True : they help him not particularly with the Great, but they add a shade of *difference* to his promise : they are part of his stock-in-trade.

His return from the country will be heralded by announcements of a Second Book and by hints of a trip to America—to lecture. Quite a number of fashionable women have by now, somehow or other, been drawn to his cause. The second-hand booksellers already list the half-sold thousand copies of his first volume as “ 1st Edition.” People who have only seen his photograph call him “ good-looking ” ; some say “ beautiful ” ; others even that he is “ like Keats.” The ball rolls. He is asked to dine at Ladies’ Clubs ; Societies want him to take the Chair ; his acquaintances think him worth real cultivation ; some one calls him *famous* ; many repeat the word.

“ Such is ; what is to be ? ” His sixteen reviewers have praised him ; his four hundred acquaintances have laughed *with* him (but *at* him behind his back) ; Mr. G., Mr. M., and a few Sirs have talked to him, or about him,

at dinner; the Ladies' Clubs have enjoyed the idea of him for an evening or two; schoolgirls have wondered if he is really like his photograph. And the poet? So far, what is he? A young man with a lively enjoyment of natural or artificial beauty, a sensitiveness for the right word, a vast instinct for self-advertisement.

It will be, as his career progresses, the business of the young professional to maintain strict appearance of such an attitude of scorn for the common public as is supposed by that common public to be natural to those who write verse or paint. He must freely display all the typical characteristics of the rôle he has adopted. Actually he is much in love with that public and most desirous of its approval. Among his colleagues he will discuss his sales almost as freely as the professional novelist. He is not satisfied with the anticipation of fame. He desires to grasp and to enjoy immortality while yet mortal. He dreams of the impression his poem will make on the public mind, until that dream becomes more absorbing than the creation of

the poem itself, and his desire to be thought a poet is stronger than his love of poetry.

The object of the *Group* is generally the attainment of wider publicity by a combination of forces. It is a support to individuals not strong enough to stand alone. It is at the same time a useful school for young poets. The custom has been imported from Paris with its factional acrimonies, jealousies and scandal-mongerings, but without its pleasant and private inner qualities. Most French groups are societies of friends, not Unions of Professional Poets. The members of English Cliques meet less at supper than in periodicals and anthologies, less in private than in public.

The individual members of a group may profit, if they are observant, by learning to avoid the vices of their colleagues, or by imitating their virtues. Thus it may happen, and it generally does, that one, two, or more persons emerge out of a movement of several, stronger by reason of collaboration. They will "rise o'er stepping-stones of their dead" *confrères*, who, continuing inevitably to imitate themselves or each other, will sink

out of a temporary limelight into the literary obscurity to which they were predestined.

The common claim of the modern group is to differ by the possession of a secret unknown to those outside its circle. The nature of the secret varies, but naturally it must be connected in some way with one of the following—

1. Choice of subject.
2. Method of treatment.
3. Idiosyncrasy of rhythm.
4. Style.

Sincerity, as a primal quality, holds, in general, a lower place than might be expected among the essential characteristics that form the standard of the average group.

The Rhymers' Club, which was the *Adam* of the modern system in England, and which included such writers as W. B. Yeats, Arthur Symons, Lionel Johnson, and also for a time, and spasmodically, John Davidson, was a private affair, and little was heard of it at the time of its existence. Its attention was devoted rather to the creation of poetry than to the recruitment of a new Public. It met

for conversation, for mutual criticism, and for supper. The two volumes of "The Book of the Rhymers' Club" did not, either, exceed a circulation of one thousand copies.

The poets of the Rhymers' Club, and certain others, as Henley, Stevenson, William Watson, filled the transition period of the 1890's with dignity but no great distinction. The chief poets of independent creative genius who spanned the change of century were Robert Bridges, Thomas Hardy, Francis Thompson, "Michael Field," W. B. Yeats, Arthur Symonds and John Davidson.

About the beginning of the new century it was thought by many of the best-known critics that a dramatic poet of real importance had appeared in the person of Stephen Phillips. His plays were taken seriously by managers, and two of them had the rare distinction of being performed consecutively for long runs in London; also a literary prize was awarded to his poems. Somewhat later Alfred Noyes was talked about. But neither of these began the new movement. Its roots are in one book, the influence of which can

be heard ringing through the verse of more than half the younger living poets of the strictly *English* school, namely A. E. Housman's *Shropshire Lad*, published in 1896.

About 1890 literary language had passed into a condition of the utmost stultification. A century filled with poets of every denomination and of extreme productiveness had drained our poetic vocabulary to its lees. A few late-comers, such as Lewis Morris, were stirring the sediment. New poets of originality were little sought, and their prospects were not good, for the public was still satisfied with the achievements of the immediate past, and was tired and conservative.

These circumstances, among others, provide a clue to the discovery of why *A Shropshire Lad* was immediately, and has been continuously, popular. It was the antithesis of that bulky pomposity of late Victorianism. Those jaded readers of good intention, on the verge of a desperate reaction against poetry, snatched eagerly at this tiny volume of some sixty lyrics. Its pure style, small bulk, condensed sentimentality, and general appeal

rendered it the ideal book of popular poetry for the moment at which it was published. The ease with which it could be imitated, and the merit to be acquired by respectable plagiarism, were alike irresistible. The influence persists even into our own time. Glancing through a few volumes at random, the following corroborative verses can be picked out :—

O come not courting me, Good Sir,
No use it is, and vain :
Another lad was here before
And will come back again.



The battery grides and jingles,
Mile succeeds to mile ;
Shaking the noonday sunshine,
The guns lunge out awhile,
And then are still awhile.



Blue skies are over Cotswold
And April snows go by,
The lasses turn their ribbons,
For April's in the sky,



The men that marched and sang with me
Are most of them in Flanders now :
I lie abed and hear the wind
Blow softly through the budding bough.



A-lying in the heather,
Three miles from college tower,
I heard the bells from college
Tell out each sunny hour.

II

The first decade of the present century was extraordinarily barren. Few of the new generation of poets had as yet attracted attention, although some had published books. All the important work of Francis Thompson and Arthur Symons was already printed. Ernest Dowson died in 1900, W. E. Henley in 1903. The sudden fame of Stephen Phillips was rapidly declining. John Davidson did not kill himself until 1909, but his only notable new books, if we reject *Mammon*, were *The Testament of John Davidson* (1908) and *Fleet Street and other Poems* (posthumous). W. B. Yeats had already published most of his best work, with the exception of some of the plays. Laurence Binyon did not succeed in adding to the interest of the decade. One literary event of supreme importance alone redeems that dreary period, namely the pub-

lication of Mr. Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts*. It should also be added that the year 1906 was brought to its knees by the vast load of Mr. Charles Doughty's epic *The Dawn in Britain*, and that in 1907 the publication of Mr. Herbert Trench's *New Poems* caused a small sensation. Mrs. Shorter still enjoyed a slight popularity. The chief newcomers were John Masefield, W. H. Davies, and Alfred Noyes. The two ladies who wrote under the joint pseudonym "Michael Field" remained, and remain, strangely unknown.

By 1910 the numbing effect of the Victorian period seems finally to have relaxed its pressure on the brain of the rising generation. The new movement which then began was related neither to the Tennysonian era, nor to the brief epoch of reaction generally known as the "nineties," nor, indeed, to the comparatively barren decade noted above. Let us trace some of the newer tendencies at work.

In 1910 the expression *free verse* had hardly been used. The blank verse of Lascelles Abercrombie was a trial to many of the soberer judges who sought to "scan" it, and

failed. The new American movement had not been heard of in England. Of French poets Verlaine and Baudelaire were thought sufficiently *new*; Mallarmé, Gustave Kahn, and such of the *vers libristes* as were already practising their free verse were looked upon as curiosities.

Certain periodicals, however, were now showing an intelligent interest in young poetry. Ford Madox Hueffer had founded the *English Review*; several critics of discrimination were writing for the *New Age*; men of a fresh generation were meeting like conspirators in obscure places. About this time Ezra Pound appeared from America, and simultaneously published his two books *Exultations* and *Personæ*, which were widely reviewed, and induced a slight disturbance in the cold hearts even of the established critics.

In 1911 Rupert Brooke's *Poems* were published. Their circulation was small, but they did not fail to cause excitement and irritation. Wilfrid Wilson Gibson made a decided impression with *Daily Bread*, a series of episodes in dramatic form from the lives of the poor,

and a fifth book by W. H. Davies appeared. Then in 1911 the *English Review*, now under the Editorship of Austin Harrison, published "The Everlasting Mercy." Here was stuff that the general public could appreciate without straining its intelligence. People who thought that English poetry had died with Tennyson suddenly recognised their error. The blank verse of Stephen Phillips was a mere echo of the Victorian manner, but the rapid free doggerel of "The Everlasting Mercy," its modernity, its bold colloquialism, and its narrative interest awakened the curiosity of the public of 1911, and a revival of the dormant interest in poetry was at once assured.

In January 1912 the *Poetry Review* was founded. It was crude and tentative: nevertheless it tried to maintain a standard of critical judgment, and it brought together several poets of the younger generation. F. S. Flint contributed some very fine essays on French poetry: to these partly can be traced the subsequent interest of certain groups in the idea of *vers libre*.

The Poetry Bookshop was opened in January 1912, and the monthly *Poetry Review* was converted into the quarterly *Poetry and Drama*. In the previous November, prior to the formal opening of the Bookshop, volume one of *Georgian Poetry* had been published.

This anthology was originally suggested by Rupert Brooke. It was discussed with Mr. Edward Marsh, who at once became its patron, and eagerly followed up the idea. It included poets, who, by the variety of their thought and manner, showed the diversity of existing talent.

The first volume covered the years 1911-12. Three more years were allowed to elapse before the publication of a second; the third and fourth followed at intervals of two years. Already in Number 2 some of the "older" writers were allowed to drop out. This second is often considered the best of the series. The third introduces J. C. Squire, Robert Nichols, and the war poems of Siegfried Sassoon, and in the fourth a tendency towards a *Georgian* manner is noticeable. Some of the writers are imitating each other in choice of

subject, or treatment, or style. This volume, unlike the first, could not be taken for a haphazard selection from the poetry of the period. It is too like the compilation of a *Group*.

Georgian Poetry set an example which was soon widely followed. Its success was the envy of groups, and of rival anthologists who did not sympathise with the taste, or agree with the choice, of Mr. Edward Marsh. While, on the right hand, there were many who deemed these poems coarse, daring, insincere, or even offensive to the traditions of English Literature, to those of the extreme left they sounded no more than the last faint re-echo of the Great Tradition.

Between 1910 and 1915 the new movement rapidly acquired direction and force. Anthologies multiplied. Besides *Georgian Poetry* there was *Oxford Poetry*, and *Cambridge Poetry*. There were the "Imagist" anthologies; later there was the annual anthology, *Wheels*. There were collections of children's poetry and of child-poets, of late Victorian verse, of nature verse, of sea verse, of mystical

verse, of "Catholic" verse (not in the ultra-montane sense), and in 1915 the English Association challenged the popularity of *Georgian Poetry* with its *Poems of To-day*, a book ostensibly compiled "in order that boys and girls, already perhaps familiar with the great classics of the English speech, may also know something of the newer poetry of their own day," and including, besides living writers both of the older and younger generations, others of the last century "still vivid memories among us," such as Meredith, Thompson, and Stevenson. The compilers of *Poems of To-day* adopted the standard of taste of an average Anglican Bishop. The book created no sensation: it has been an amazing success.

New Numbers, a quarterly founded in 1914 by Lascelles Abercrombie, Rupert Brooke, John Drinkwater, and Wilfrid Wilson Gibson for the publication of their own poems, just overlapped the declaration of war, and some Dean quoted Brooke's soldier-sonnets (in the last number) from the pulpit of Westminster Abbey.

Meanwhile on the very morrow of the

declaration an uproar of song burst from the throats of our lyrical poets. *The Times* for August 5th gave prominence to verses by Henry Newbolt; on the 6th to a sonnet by William Watson; on the 7th R. E. Vernède occupied a large space, and on the 8th an expected but unfortunate poem by the Laureate took up its position. The names of all the well-known followed each other in ceremonial sequence into daily print. Kipling arrived somewhat late and breathless and obscure. William Watson panted through a series of preposterous threats and ejaculations, such as :—

The Mill of Lies is loud,
Whose overseer, Germania's Over-lord,
Hath overmuch adored
The Over-sword,
And shall be overthrown, with the overproud.

Mr. Hardy, not until September 9th, printed in *The Times* his strong and dignified "March of the Soldiers." John Masefield wrote one poem only, and that of great beauty. A few others were able to keep their heads—and their reputations.

When the efforts of well-known writers had subsided some of their poems were at once reprinted in anthologies, and minor or unknown bards were allowed to take their places in the line. Thus many young authors acquired spurious reputations under the cloak of Patriotism : these might, in fact, be called War Profiteers. The danger of writing verse to fulfil a demand is well known. Manufactured poetry seldom withstands the test of analysis. It is an axiom that emotion must flow spontaneously into appropriate language, so that the poet who is aware of his public, and of what it expects of him, often passes through various stages of disastrous self-consciousness into artificiality or vacuity. An editor or publisher who plies his favourite authors for manuscripts too often has to endure the experience of receiving from them compositions much inferior to his expectations.

This book is to deal with living poets of the younger generation, that is, with those who still have the power and the apparent wish to continue their career as writers. Poets like J. E. Flecker and Rupert Brooke

will only be mentioned as influences, though really they are more *living* than many another who still has breath in his body. As a treatise on current poetry it will attempt to provide the guidance necessary for the uninformed, and at the same time to offer certain facts and problems for the consideration of the informed. Flattery will be absent from its pages, and the fear of giving offence will not influence its composition. The intention is to supply the public with reasonable data on which to base its own preferences. It is not to be imagined that so many genuinely good poets as the large number that will be discussed could possibly be living and writing contemporaneously at any period in any country, but it is conceivable that such a quantity of interesting writers may co-exist, a proportion of them possessing the originality and insight requisite to the good poet and the remainder forming a background, and in more senses than one completing (if only by contrast) the literary atmosphere of the moment, from which the more universal figures may emerge.

PART II

A GLANCE BACKWARD

ROUND the margin of the plot we are about to explore stand, some rather still, or with unoccupied hands and contemplative eyes, others (we may imagine) with a light ironical smile playing on their lips, others perhaps with the jealous sneer of disappointment, but most rather aloof now and pre-occupied with memories of the last century—they stand, the elder poets, who, whatever they may yet add to the roll of their works, have, by the existing scope of their production qualified for some, or no, place in the annals of English literature, and indicated clearly enough what they will probably be worth to the future.

For quantity a few of these rival the masters of the past. The collected poems of Mr. Robert Bridges, Mr. Thomas Hardy, or Mr. Wilfrid Blunt are as bulky as the average library edition of a classic. This is not alone due to the long period of time

which their works cover. It is partly accounted for by the fluency of self-confidence. If to the three mentioned above we add the names of Mr. W. B. Yeats, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, and Mr. Charles Doughty, it will generally be agreed that we have named the six most important living poets of the older generation. With the exception of Mr. Doughty (who was already a literary veteran when his first poetical work was published) all these originally appeared in print some years before 1900, and the greater part of their poetry was conceived, if not written, before the reaction against long poems had attained its present vehemence—or shall we say, rather, before the generation had arisen that is tortured with self-consciousness and too uncertain of its own powers ever fully to use them?

These six great poets are men of strong and very different personality. Mr. ROBERT BRIDGES, we are told, accepted the Laureateship on his own terms, and it is certain that, in his almost complete abstention from the composition of ceremonial odes, or of artificial

complimentary poems, as by his continued concentration on the theory and practice of his own proper art, he has restored much dignity to the office, besides adding a significance which it had not previously possessed. When a newspaper photographer called on Mr. Bridges, the Laureate leaned back in his easy chair and lifted his feet high on to the mantelpiece: in that pose he appeared on the front page of a daily picture-paper. After Horatio Bottomley, with customary impudence, had tried in Parliament to cast ridicule on Mr. Bridges, the Laureate was again visited by the Press. His comment on the incident was said to be: "I don't care a damn." Nor need he. His poetry will be read and enjoyed as long as the English language is written and understood.

Mr. THOMAS HARDY has lived isolated in his native county. His attitude towards pressmen, critics, biographers, Americans and other inquisitive people is related to be even more overbearing than that of Mr. Bridges. He did not begin publishing poetry until

1895. His ballads and lyrics are characterised by freedom from the poetic conventions of the English tongue, and by a certain awkwardness of style due to their emotional vigour. *The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars in Nineteen Acts and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes*, is, he writes in his preface, "a play intended simply for mental performance, and not for the stage." Whatever his intention, some critics have begged to differ with its author as to the dramatic potentialities of *The Dynasts*. As a poem, it is unique in English literature; as a play it is undoubtedly the forerunner (if not in itself the first model) of a dramatic form that, before long, will be the preoccupation of European producers. In its entirety, it will probably first be presented in Germany. Mr. Hardy is more interested in content than in form. Assuming that a small amount of literary scandal may be admitted to enliven the pages of a work such as the present, we should like to retail the following tiny legend: "After having completed *The Dynasts*, Mr. Hardy

was seen at the British Museum studying various works on technique, prosody, and scansion."

MR. WILFRID BLUNT'S *Esther: A Young Man's Tragedy* together with his *Satan Absolved: A Victorian Mystery* and *Griselda: A Society Novel in Rhymed Verse* would alone entitle him to the respect due to a great writer. But he has also published hundreds of sonnets and lyrical poems, and several plays, besides pastorals and translations [*sic*] from the Arabic, including the well-known "Stealing of the Mare." Much of the minor poetry is that of an intellectual country gentleman, a lover of horses, nature and woman. Early in 1914 a band of poets journeyed to his country-seat to make a presentation. The following verses of address (we believe by Ezra Pound) were read:—

Because you have gone your individual gait,
Written fine verses, made mock of the world,
Swung the grand style, not made a trade of art,
Upheld Mazzini and detested institutions;
We, who are little given to respect,
Respect you, and having no better way to show it,
Bring you this stone to be some record of it.

Acknowledging the presentation of a carved marble reliquary, Mr. Blunt is reported to have said that he felt, to a certain extent, an impostor. He had never really been a poet. He had written a certain amount of verse, but only when he was down on his luck and had made mistakes either in love or politics or in some branch of active life. He did not publish a single verse with his name until he was forty-three. When he had heard of the intended visit of the deputation he had at first been rather puzzled and wondered whether he was to expect some of his horsey friends, or political admirers. When he found that the visit was connected with his poetry he was all the more flattered and astonished.

Mr. W. B. YEATS is the antithesis of Mr. Blunt. His whole life has been devoted to his art. He is the most famous of living Irish poets, and is generally considered the most active force in what is known as the "Celtic Revival." In him is no trace of the distant and haughty attitude of the typical English poet. He is an expert and adept in

every branch of imaginative literature. Unlike the large majority of his contemporaries, he adds to the art of composing poetry the art, so rare to-day, of speaking verse. His lyrics are, in the original sense, lyrical, which is to say, that in the nature of their rhythm and through their marked variety of stress they lead the reader to suppose, or imagine, an accompanying musical counterpoint. In the literal sense of that abused term, they *sing*.

Mr. Yeats is a strong advocate of the application of the poet solely to his art, the difficulties of which he has never failed to indicate in his own frequent and scrupulous revision of his poems and dramas, also in his critical prose.

With the verse of Mr. RUDYARD KIPLING we are not much concerned. Its sale far exceeds that of any other living verse-writer—except, perhaps, John Oxenham. Mr. Kipling's strong individuality has made itself felt throughout English-speaking lands. On account of his political views he would, if the choice had been relegated to general suffrage,

undoubtedly have been offered the Laureateship on the death of Alfred Austin. His rhythms are of the popular type, and on account of the extreme ease with which they can be copied, they have provided a model for the plagiarism of many an ambitious poetaster incapable of cultivating, or too lazy to practise, an original manner of his own.

Of Mr. CHARLES DOUGHTY'S *Dawn in Britain* it has been cynically conjectured that only one man in the whole world has read it through from beginning to end, and that—himself. It is doubtful whether such an epic be compatible with the literary taste of our own period, in expressing which very doubt we imply that some future age may wonder at our lack of attention. Mr. Doughty has avoided the pitfalls of post-Miltonic epic-writers. He has created a new epic language, which, in construction, its omission of articles and use of the pure genitive and conciseness of phrase, is akin to the classical languages; for vocabulary, he has borrowed wholesale from Spenser and the Elizabethans; and as

to atmosphere, he has made one admirably suited to the portrayal of those "antique wights" of "uncouth speech" with whom he is concerned. The reader could only wish that such frequent and clumsy inversion of the natural order of words had not been found necessary to the close-packed condensation of his epic style. When the same methods are applied in subsequent poems to other, and even, though in a minor degree, to modern subjects, a numbness creeps on the mind and a suspicion of wilful perversity. Such clumsiness as appears in the opening lines of *The Titans* is surely unwarrantable :—

'Neath Heaven's high stars, whereof we some see cease.

Yet Mr. Doughty is a giant among poets, a fact only to be fully recognised as we approach the minor figures of the period at present under discussion.

ALICE MEYNELL published her first volume in 1875. She is an early example of the reticence that is now conspicuous in most branches of English poetry. Of the six great poets referred to above it cannot be said

of any that he is not, besides being a poet, a man of the world. Mr. Bridges was a Doctor of Medicine and has, we understand, been all his life a genial man-among-men; Mr. Hardy was an architect, earned his reputation as a novelist, and acquired his experience outside the circles of literature; Mr. Blunt, admittedly, has always been more interested in horses than in poetry; Mr. Yeats has taken an active part throughout his life in the practical side of theatrical production; Mr. Kipling is a political pamphleteer; Mr. Doughty was an explorer of uncivilised countries.

Mrs. Meynell, however, and other poets who will be mentioned in the course of this book, seem to have devoted themselves so exclusively to their art that they have not realised it as an outcome of the habit of Life that all poetry is intended to express.

Among the less important living poets of the elder generation, Arthur Symonds, Henry Newbolt and T. Sturge Moore should be designated as writers of strong personality. Mr. Edmund Gosse himself stated in the

preface to the collected edition of his poems that they "belong in essence to a period which has ceased to exist, to an age which is as dead as the dodo." It is impossible to overlook the virulent talent of Sir William Watson, or the persistent loyalty to all the main traditions of Mr. Laurence Binyon. The poems, however, of Arthur Symons, T. Sturge Moore, Henry Newbolt, Herbert Trench and Alfred Douglas are probably the most representative among those of this second category of the poets overlapping, or immediately following, the Victorian era.

There remain to be mentioned: A. E., an Irish mystic of the Celtic School; Maurice Hewlett, a writer of several long poems, some of them of much psychological interest, and others of historic value; Margaret L. Woods, whose dramas in lively exciting verse will probably be recognised as among the best specimens of the pure dramatic literature of the time; Katharine Tynan; Francis Coutts; Richard Le Gallienne; A. C. Benson; Norman Gale; Arthur Quiller-Couch, and T. W. H. Crosland, a poet of occasional vigour.

It may be remarked of some of the above that they seem like people whose eyes, ears, and brains are closed in respect of the state of our general Humanity, or who behave as if they thought Parnassus had been enclosed within the walls of some Landed Proprietor.

PART III
POETS AND POETASTERS OF OUR TIME

SECTION I

THE style of A. E. HOUSMAN is built of a combination of all the principal elements of popular poetry. His subjects are those most common to human existence; friendship, love, character, heroism, homesickness, crime, death, the last figuring in excessive proportion to the others: at least a quarter of his book is solely about Death. He uses the traditional ballad-forms and song-forms; his rhythms are of the simplest kind; many of his poems tell a story; all contain at least the elements of a story, and all "sing." He very frequently rouses feelings of pity; he stimulates love of home and of the native-land; he excites admiration for heroic action; he touches constantly and ironically on the disappointments of young love. All the most ordinary things that people do, see or think in the course of their little lives are mentioned in his poems. Two salient characteristics

mark them as different from the rest of their kind : his philosophy of life and death, and some peculiar personal method in his use of vocabulary and form.

Some one has called *A Shropshire Lad* the "English Rubaiyat"—a suggestive comparison. These English lyrics present a western version of that philosophy of life contained in Fitzgerald's beautiful fragment from the Eastern poet. Neither work is pessimistic : each offers a compensation for the certainty that death is a final end to personal existence. The western compensation is Friendship, a word the true meaning of which clergymen and social workers try to confuse by spelling it "Brotherhood."

Mr. Housman's style can be analysed with as much ease and more success than it can be imitated. It is coloured by the very frequent use of local names : Shropshire ; Severn ; Ludlow ; Shrewsbury ; Bredon ; Corve ; Teme ; Hughley. It is characterised by the persistent recurrence of a certain type of word or phrase, chiefly rustic : boys ; lovers ; lads ; wedding ; fair ; sweetheart ; chap ; friend ; comrade ; youth ; one-and-twenty ; good

people; my love and I; the lads and the girls; fortunate fellows; country lover; girls go maying; golden friends; Dick and Ned; rose-lipped maiden and lightfoot lad.

It shows the greatest forbearance, containing not a word too many and revealing a complete resistance to the common temptation to add ornament, the yielding to which has ruined the style of so many a lesser poet. It conveys the appearance of ease, and the feeling of vigour. It is truly a style: not a *manner*. Lastly, where it includes poetical devices or the use of inversion, these are so discriminatingly managed as to render them either unobtrusive, or else noticeably and characteristically proper to their context.

The compilation of *A Shropshire Lad* evidently covered a period of several years. Its poems appear to represent successive phases of a disciplined literary development: they are suggestive individually of a series of recreative holidays, of spasmodic escapes from the atmosphere of a scholarly routine. Their most inventive metrical innovation is best represented in that well-known lyric, "Bredon Hill." Here we have an ordinary

half-rhymed, three-stressed quatrain; the unrhymed lines with a feminine termination. The structure and rhythm of the stanza is such, according to the traditions of English verse, as to make the reader expect the certainty of a halt at the end of each fourth line. The device, therefore, of adding a fifth line, with a plaintive echoing cadence, to each quatrain is one which never fails to produce a pleasurable surprise both in the case of each stanza and on every new reading of the whole poem.

Our complaint against A. E. Housman must be that he is not a genius. In the steady light of such talent, we others are able to sit down comfortably, and examine, joint by joint, the artificial structure that we suspect, while no flash interferes with the routine of our analytical speculations. Thus it has happened that his followers have developed a kind of school of designed pseudo-perfectitude, based vicariously upon, but uninformed by the native impulses that flow through the stanzas of that new intellectual folk-poetry he has so deftly invented.



The poetry of JOHN MASEFIELD is dominated and pervaded throughout by a religious belief in the idea of Beauty. An examination of his lyrical poems reveals the gradual development of a crude instinct into a mature and conscious knowledge. The faith he has now reached is fanatical. His latest lyrics repeat and expand it to exhaustion. *Salt Water Ballads* (some of them written in boyhood) are straightforward exercises in the precise metrical utterance of individual experience. He was a mariner himself, which fact rings through such a refrain as :—

Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

Behind this we have the real Masefield, consecrated to his cause from early youth :—

Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the
mirth,
The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth;—
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and scum of
the earth !

His poems and tales, whether lyric, ballad, or narrative, have a grip of fact and sense of reality combined with queer ironical pathos :—

With anchors hungry for English ground,
And the bloody fun of it is, they're drowned !

Most of the early pieces are in sailor jargon, a shorthand of the sea, with a peculiar abbreviation, "'n'", which conveys a dozen different words. A primitive salty mariner-folk rambles through them, dressed in red bandanas or tinted dungaree, and recites or explains, in a monotonous galloping metre with heavy beats, its raw belief in ghostly superstitions and its helpless indifference to cruelty, or to death. It is the old sailing-ship mariner with bad, but not vulgar, grammar, who, seen through the eyes of Masefield, is a beatific fellow with visions of a Golden City, or Blessed Isles, or a "Kingdom Come" which is "a sunny pleasant anchoring," or who, after he has become a "rusty corp" and been thrown overboard, easily adopts bird-like form, sailing above the rigging as a seagull. Also there are pirates :—

Ah! the pig-tailed, quidding pirates and the pretty
pranks we played,
All have since been put a stop-to by the naughty
Board of Trade;

The poetry of John Masefield in its early stages was comparatively artless. He was a good story-teller with a strong sense of colour

and excitement, a limited lyrical capacity, and an obvious personal mission. As he comes inland, his art somewhat develops, but its subjects are connected principally with love of the sea, meditation on death, the worship of ideal Beauty. He returns with less frequency to those first galloping or chanty measures. "On Eastnor Knoll," "Fragments" and the famous and beautiful poem "Cargoes" show his lyrical powers in full development.

Obviously the poet must be almost without self-criticism who can have allowed the first stanza of "Midsummer Night," besides many others equally absurd, to be reprinted through several editions :—

The perfect disc of the sacred moon
Through still blue heaven serenely swims,
And the lone bird's liquid music brims
The peace of the night with a perfect tune.

He seems never to have reconsidered his bad verses. "My road leads me forth," he explains,

In quest of that one beauty
God put me here to find.

His consecration is absolute :—

O beauty on the darkness hurled,
Be it through me you shame the world.

His idealisation takes many aspects; it was with him from infancy :—

When the white clover opened Paradise
And God lived in a cottage up the brook,
Beauty you lifted up my sleeping eyes
And filled my heart with longing with a look.

In the book called *Lollingdon Downs* he seeks in a series of poems to convey by inference the nature of that abstract presence :—

Beauty, the ghost, the spirit's common speech,
incarnated or represented over the whole earth, which is to him the pattern for all conduct and the measure of all values. It is, of course, that same Spirit of Beauty, the "awful shadow of some unseen Power" to which Shelley dedicated himself, and the most cogent remark we can pass on this particular book is that Shelley would certainly have carried it about in his pocket. The following lines are like an epitome of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" :—

that Beauty I have sought
In women's hearts, in friends, in many a place,
In barren hours passed at grips with thought,
Beauty of woman, comrade, earth and sea,
Incarnate thought come face to face with me.

In "A Creed," the opening stanzas of which are here quoted, he expresses, with clarity, his belief concerning the life of the individual :—

I hold that when a person dies
His soul returns again to earth ;
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise
Another mother gives him birth.
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain
The old soul takes the road again.

Such is my own belief and trust ;
This hand, this hand that holds the pen,
Has many a hundred times been dust
And turned, as dust, to dust again ;
These eyes of mine have blinked and shone
In Thebes, in Troy, in Babylon.

In many other poems he enlarges on this faith, and he searches the horizons of history for its corroboration. He apparently admits free will and the personal power to control fate. All conquest is attained through realisation of the spirit of Beauty.

Neither his philosophy nor his science takes us very far beyond Tennyson. As regards individual immortality he is often speculative and contradictory. In "The Passing Strange" he adopts the measure of "The

Two Voices," and in a sonnet he uses the expression "behind the veil."

With a few exceptions, however, his lyrical is a more finished product than his narrative poetry. Curiously, he is more careful even of his prose than of his narrative verse, in which he seems to trust to instinct, or to luck. Being a *raconteur* on a large scale, he finds attention to detail irksome. He is apparently under the impression that a certain sufficient beauty is already established in the mere thrill of a good story, or that the critical reader, under the stress of excitement, will be disarmed of criticism.

John Masefield has not allowed himself to be warned by the example of Byron, Wordsworth, Southey, Scott and others. Like them he has written too carelessly and printed too often. He is the opposite of A. E. Housman. His *best* filters through long passages of the mediocre, and, on account of too little patience in himself, he has sorely tried the patience of an expectant and enthusiastic public.

He shows to advantage in certain intermediate poems, neither quite lyrical nor

narrative, such as "Biography," "Ships," and "August, 1914" (his only war-poem). Some of the narratives, for instance "Rosas," "The Daffodil Fields," "Enslaved," "The Hounds of Hell" and the play "Philip the King," contain passages of surprising inferiority. A few brief examples may be quoted. From "The Daffodil Fields" :—

You'll say I've broken Mary's heart ; the heart {
Is not the whole of life, but an inferior part, }

From "The Hounds of Hell" :—

A glow shone on the whitish thing,
It neither stirred nor spoke :
In spite of faith, a shuddering
Made the good saint to choke.

From "Philip the King" :—

The dead will rise from unsuspected slime ; {
God's chosen will be gathered in God's time. }

These instances are not the most shocking that could be found. In some cases the heat of the narrative has been apparently so violent that even grammar seems to have faltered.

But let us turn our attention to the general value of the best of these longer poems rather than fix it on the defects of the worst. "The

‘Wanderer,’ ” for instance, is a lyrical narrative of exquisite beauty.

I looked with them towards the dimness ; there
Gleamed like a Spirit striding out of night,
A full-rigged ship unutterably fair,
Her masts like trees in winter, frosty-bright.

“ The River ” is a thrilling story of the terrible fate of a ship. “ Dauber ” is a long sea yarn in the author’s favourite seven-line stanza, sad, realistic, with beautiful passages and few serious blemishes. “ The Widow in the Bye Street,” a tale of Black Country murder, is probably the best of all these poems. The characters are clear in every detail ; the atmosphere is registered by means of a running descriptive commentary that harmonises at every point with the development of the action. Fate moves about like a living protagonist prompting the persons of the story to play their part in strict accordance with his design.

“ Reynard the Fox ” is a thrilling narrative with great descriptive passages, particularly in the second part. It was handed recently by some literary sportsman to the huntsman of one of the crack midland packs, to whom it

appealed strongly. His criticism was as follows: "A damned good run—but a Bank Holiday Field."

"The Everlasting Mercy" has already been referred to in Part I. The workmanship of "Enslaved" is so poor that, as a poem, it is hardly tolerable. The question may be raised whether this and some of the other narratives should have been written down in verse at all. The poetical material at the author's disposal has proved insufficient: padding of a most inferior kind has resulted. The perpetual recurrence of certain abstract epithets such as "perfect," or qualifying nouns, such as "queen" in reference to a ship, becomes very wearisome. Landscapes are dulled by too frequent descriptive repetition of their salient characteristics: streams, celandine, and smoke from cottage chimneys by day; stars, stars, always stars by night.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to "place" John Masefield. He differs widely from his immediate contemporaries, none of whom have ventured so extensive a range of production. If we survey the past, we find that the fame of most narrative poetry has hardly survived

its own generation. Many of his lyrical poems, at all events, will be permanently embodied among the treasures of the English language.



Very old are we men ;
Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
By Eve's nightingales ;
We wake and whisper awhile,
But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
Of amaranth lie.

Those people who are born by mysterious circumstances into an imaginative world foreign to their surrounding material world are often so bewildered by the incongruity of their state that they become neurotics.

Some such condition is implied by WALTER DE LA MARE in a poem called " Haunted."

The deepest solitude can bring
Only a subtler questioning
In thy divided heart ; thy bed
Recalls at dawn what midnight said ;
Seek how thou wilt to feign content
Thy flaming ardour's quickly spent ;
Soon thy last company is gone,
And leaves thee—with thyself—alone.

As for himself, he takes up the following attitude when possible :—

Leave this vain questioning. Is not sweet the rose?
Sings not the wild bird ere to rest he goes?
Hath not in miracle brave June returned?
Burns not her beauty as of old it burned?
O foolish one to roam
So far in thine own mind away from home !

The material world, as he knows it, is a gay cloak in which our dreams and tales wrap themselves. “ Mrs. Earth ” is not a particularly redoubtable old lady :—

Mrs. Earth the slenderest bone
Whitens in her bosom cold,
But Mrs. Earth can't change my dreams
No more than ruby or gold.

He shows about the same interest in her characteristics as in those of the other old ladies he describes : Miss Loo, Old Susan, Miss T., or the “ poor old widow ” ; and any other beings, though they may happen to be witches, dwarfs, gnomes, fairies, impersonations, or even phantoms are no less familiar or more supernatural to him than “ real ” beings. One way of stating the truth about him is to say that he finds it almost impossible to distinguish between the two worlds usually

known as *real* and *unreal* ; another that the Real is so actually *real* to him that he absolutely fails to differentiate its legendary from its historical form. Thus when he begins a poem

I spied John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone ;
In the dark he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.

we have no idea at first that this same John will turn out to be what is commonly known as "abstraction," any more than we are ever able to determine whether the "poor old widow in her weeds" who "sowed her garden with wild flower seeds" may be a real widow-woman, subject to the calls of the Rate Collector, or than we care whether the "three jolly farmers" actually tried, or did not, to dance each other off the ground—for in the end, if we learn his poetry well enough, we become as careless as the poet himself in distinguishing between so-called Reality and Unreality.

It should be observed that Walter de la Mare, unlike most poets, never boasts of the pleasures of the imagination, or of the wonders

it can call forth, by merely naming them for the edification of his readers. His series of "Characters from Shakespeare" describes Falstaff, Iago, Polonius, Hamlet and others in such a manner as to lead us solemnly to wonder whether the poet has not some ulterior evidence for establishing them as authenticated historical persons; but then we turn up such other characters as Martha, Mrs. Macqueen, the Scarecrow, or that Englishman, of whom it may be read

He said no more, that sailorman,
But in a reverie
Stared like the figure of a ship
With painted eyes to sea.

and, finding them just as "historical" in their essence, we understand the actual lack of difference between incarnate reality and imaginative reality. The poem called "The Listeners" brings to a climax our incompetence to distinguish between men and ghosts, for here the "lonely Traveller" who knocks on the moonlit door, though able to ride up to the lone house, and to ride away again, and even to speak, is no more human than the "host of phantom listeners," and when he

leaves them silent and unstirring in their dwelling-place we feel that the lack of intercourse has only been due to some failure to approach them in the correct manner, and we are not at all certain whether the traveller, who does speak, be not the unreality and the listeners, who fail to speak, the reality in the episode.

Walter de la Mare is a poet to whom form is mere outside appearance, acceptable only so far as it tends to convey some significant idea ; to whom the phenomena of life are symbols that can unfailingly be interpreted by the imagination. His references to Science are few. The following sonnet, though not among the maturer poems, is, nevertheless, an extraordinarily definite statement of the relation between Science and Poetry :—

THE HAPPY ENCOUNTER

I saw sweet Poetry turn troubled eyes
On shaggy Science nosing in the grass,
For by that way poor Poetry must pass
On her long pilgrimage to Paradise.
He snuffled, grunted, squealed ; perplexed by flies,
Parched, weatherworn, and near of sight, alas !
From peering close where very little was
In dens secluded from the open skies.

But Poetry in bravery went down,
And called his name, soft, clear, and fearlessly ;
Stooped low, and stroked his muzzle overgrown ;
Refreshed his drouth with dew ; wiped pure and free
His eyes : and lo ! laughed loud for joy to see
In those grey depths the azure of her own.

His art needs little discussion. It depends chiefly on harmony, melody and rhyme. His style is fluid and his diction free from unnatural elevation, or rhetorical expansion. Inversions are frequent, intentional and seldom ineffective. He has certain definite rhythmical devices, but little would be gained by attempting to explain them.

Quite half his verse is composed for children, and yet who shall say it is more adapted to the child than to the matured person ? All the best traditional poetry, nursery rhyme, song or ballad, has the same kind of inspired innocence.



Nobody has succeeded, nor will succeed, in imitating RALPH HODGSON'S style. A poem published a short time ago in a magazine was closely modelled on "The Song of Honour," and, though it contained fair passages, it made one laugh, as any mimicry will ; a star-

ling, for instance, trying the blackbird's song, or a parrot making noises like the human voice. Ralph Hodgson does not seem, any more than John Masefield, to have prudently cultivated the art of poetry; he has no literary pose. But, unlike Masefield, he is endowed with natural discipline.

He is very witty and has a rare gift for turning an epigram. His poems are full of allusions to dogs and birds. Their phraseology resembles the careless offhand language of the ordinary man, and has the precision of detail noticeable chiefly among those who are little accustomed to reading books, and are, therefore, not hampered in their choice of words by dint of a memory packed with the *clichés* of literature. It also has a curious sporting ring. We come upon (and not usually for any reason inherent in the poems where they occur) phrases that belong to the vocabulary of dog-breeding, prize-fighting, hunting, coaching and the other native pastimes of England. The following are a few instances: Turn upon the cur. Now to get even. Put up your caravan. The song of pretty fighters. Tighten your rein. Start your whelps a-whin-

ing. I took my soul astray. In dream he hunts a furrow. Alert from top to toe. Little hunted hares. At odds with life and limb; and the poem entitled "The Bull," by reason of its subject, is full of such expressions: A thousand head. Bravely by his fall he came. A bull of blood. Hero of a thousand kills.

It cannot be doubted that this sporting phraseology is contributive, in a way, to the popularity of Ralph Hodgson's poetry. While most poets glean their vocabulary from poetry itself, this one gathers his, as it were, raw from life. He owes little to the tradition of English literature, but very much to the traditions of English living. The education of the kennel and prize ring offers a fitter introduction to his style than any classical learning. Reading him we think: Here is a man who talks only a language of his own, and with such native purity does he use this tongue he knows so well, that he never utters a word of it in a wrong sense, nor fails to make himself clearly understood.

The Housman influence is entirely absent. Indeed one is inclined to believe that Ralph Hodgson does not much read his contempo-

raries. "The Song of Honour" is in direct descent from the "Song of David," by Christopher Smart. We recognise no other influences.

It is generally supposed that all the poems worthy of delight are contained in the small volume of twenty-five items issued in 1917, and the book published in 1907 under the title *The Last Blackbird* has been neglected by critics and depreciated (it is said) by its author himself in a manner not merited. If we cast aside the first volume on account of its obvious defects, we shall be depriving ourselves of the enjoyment of such poems as "The Hammers," and others.

"The Bull," "The Song of Honour" and several other poems had been published, previous to their appearance in the 1917 volume, as broadsides and in small yellow chapbooks at sixpence each. This revival of an excellent old custom was carried out in collaboration with C. Lovat Fraser, an artist whose decorations admirably suited the enterprise. For imprint the title *Flying Fame* was adopted. In this form the poems already gained that popularity they so well deserved,

and the precedent was again established of placing verse on the market, at first, in some cheap edition, testing, in fact, its selling potentialities by offering the public initial samples of its quality.

It is not the scheme of this book to quote at any length, but rather, by pointing out their principal qualities, to convey some impression of the atmosphere of the works under discussion. Nevertheless we cannot better conclude these remarks on the poetry of Ralph Hodgson than by reprinting two typical specimens of his shorter lyrics :—

THE MYSTERY

He came and took me by the hand
Up to a red rose tree,
He kept His meaning to Himself
But gave a rose to me.

I did not pray Him to lay bare
The mystery to me,
Enough the rose was Heaven to smell,
And His own face to see.

THE BELLS OF HEAVEN

'Twould ring the bells of Heaven
The wildest peal for years,
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs,

And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers
And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched, blind pit ponies,
And little hunted hares.



Sing out, my Soul, thy songs of joy;
Such as a happy bird will sing
Beneath a Rainbow's lovely arch
In early spring.

As a general rule modern poets should rather use the word *mumble*, *drawl*, or, at all events, *write*, than "sing." It is rare for an author of verse to be able to speak his verse, or even to read it aloud fluently and engagingly. But the little poems of WILLIAM H. DAVIES sing themselves. They attract and attach to themselves stray melodies. Most of them can be memorised more as tunes than as combinations of words, and where the actual phrases have slipped from the memory, some mental association may often recall their melodious rhythms, just as the melody of a song may be remembered when the words are forgotten.

We learn in his poems much about himself :—

As long as I love Beauty I am young,
Am young or old as I love more or less ;

Indeed this is sweet life ! My hand
Is under no proud man's command ;

That “ singing ” of his depends on a temperamental condition favourably attuned to its natural surroundings.

When I do hear these joyful birds,
I cannot sit with my heart dumb ;
I cannot walk among these flowers,
But I must help the bees to hum.

A temporary failure of that song in his own heart is one of his few causes of despondency :—

Sweet Poesy, why art thou dumb !
I fear thy singing days are done ;
The poet in my soul is dying,
And every charm in life is gone ;

When the mood occurs the poet is apparently able to make a song out of the very fact that he feels he cannot make one, and, in the intervals between, he is as forgetful of his occasional misfortunes as the birds themselves :—

When on a summer's morn I wake,
And open my two eyes,
Out to the clear born-singing rills
My bird-like spirit flies.

Contemplation and observation are his great delights, and the subjects of his poems arbitrarily occur to him while thus amusing himself. The habit evident among many of his contemporaries of consciously selecting their subjects is plainly absent in him. J. C. Squire's "The Moon," a poem of three hundred and twenty lines, is as the achievement of a trained long-distance runner compared with Davies' lyric of twelve lines on the same subject :—

Though there are birds that sing this night
With thy white beams across their throats,
Let my deep silence speak for me
More than for them their sweetest notes :

His language is mostly that of ordinary speech. Where the inversion occurs, as in such lines as,

A little boy
Can life enjoy ;

it is not through any lack of skill. It interferes therefore as little as in nursery rhymes or ballads with the quaint simplicity of the

poet's diction. Sometimes it adds vividness :—

The Moon was dying with a stare ;
Horses, and kine, and sheep were seen
As still as pictures, in fields green.

The “ notes ” that some poets compile as helps to the imagination appear to be incorporated by W. H. Davies wholly and directly into the body of his works, as in the foregoing quotation, and also in the two following :—

When I came forth this morn I saw
Quite twenty cloudlets in the air.

And she is known as Jenny Wren,
The smallest bird in England . . .

His philosophy of life and of living is almost unimaginably simple.

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.



Much have I thought of life, and seen
How poor men's hearts are ever light ;



The mind, with its own eyes and ears,
May for these others have no care ;
No matter where this body is,
The mind is free to go elsewhere.

The statement that "poor men's hearts are ever light" does not appear entirely compatible with some of the experiences transcribed elsewhere, but mental or material misery is traced to the influences of the town, and the voice of complaint is not raised, nor are earthly evils attributed directly to human or supernatural agency.

What is known as "religious speculation" is apparently very rare to Davies. The following is one of his few definite statements in this connection :—

Lord, I say nothing ; I profess
No faith in Thee nor Christ Thy Son :
Yet no man ever heard me mock
A true believing one.

It is not surprising that a temperament so little complicated by introspective or retrospective moods should accept human existence at its face value.

The child is always a fresh marvel to him. His sympathy is great for suffering children or women ; for beautiful women, his adoration. He seems to worship them with his body more than with his mind. His tales are generally about the poor. His classical allusions are

few. He is powerfully attracted by the sea, by good company, and by ale.



The Farmer's Bride is a book of forty pages containing seventeen poems. This at present is CHARLOTTE MEW's only published work. The whole of Mrs. Browning's remains can hardly be compressed into five hundred pages of double column. Such poets would not, or could not, learn condensation or practise forbearance. They shirked weeding their own gardens which thus fell to seed, and the flowers are now lost in a tangle of forsaken undergrowth.

Charlotte Mew will not burden futurity with an "Essay on Mind" in two long books of rhymed couplets and with notes, nor with a "Battle of Marathon" in four cantos, nor an "Aurora Leigh" in nine books. Her poetry reveals plainly that she is too modest a person and too authentic an artist. Her imagination could not wander through hundreds of lines of blank verse, or, if it tried, discretion would certainly laugh it back homewards.

The story of *The Farmer's Bride* would

have resolved itself in the mind of Mrs. Browning into a poem of at least two thousand lines; Mr. Browning might have worked it up to six thousand; Meredith would not have been satisfied with a novel of less than five hundred pages. Here is Charlotte Mew's presentation of the subject—

Three Summers since I chose a maid,
 Too young maybe—but more's to do
At harvest-time than bide and woo.
 When us was wed she turned afraid
Of love and me and all things human;
Like the shut of a winter's day.
 Her smile went out, and 'twasn't a woman—
 More like a little frightened fay.
 One night, in the Fall, she runned away.

The story is told in forty-six lines, marred by no verbiage. It develops its own appropriate rhythm as it proceeds. It passes with the certainty of Fate to the tragical concluding lines:—

She sleeps up in the attic there
Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair
Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down,
The soft young down of her, the brown,
The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!

One of the peculiarities of the authoress of these poems is a projection of herself outside

herself, so that a kindred personality seems walking with her through life, her own, yet not her own. "Fame" begins:—

Sometimes in the over-heated house, but not for long,
Smirking and speaking rather loud,
I see myself among the crowd,
Where no one fits the singer to his song,
Or sifts the unpainted from the painted faces
Of the people who are always on my stair;
They were not with me when I walked in heavenly
places;

She does not tire you with her personality; but continually interests you in its strange reflections. There is a rumour through the whole book of Death (that favourite subject of all poetry), as of a fact in the background, not to be forgotten, yet not a reality. It involves the parting of friends: otherwise it is not important. Grief is more terrible, far more absorbing, than death. It is not a wringing of hands, or wailing. It quickens perception and excites compassion.

Red is the strangest pain to bear;
In Spring the leaves on the budding trees;
In Summer the roses are worse than these,
More terrible than they are sweet:
A rose can stab you across the street
Deeper than any knife:

It is difficult to form any clear conception of the authoress of these poems. She only half surrenders the magic of her personality :—

Give me the key that locks your tired eyes,
And I will lend you this one from my pack,
Brighter than coloured beads and painted books that
make men wise :

Take it. No, give it back !

Charlotte Mew's poem "The Changeling" is one of the most original of its kind in modern poetry. It has nothing in common with Christina Rossetti, Stevenson, Walter de la Mare, or any other writer of fairy poetry. It is neither written down nor up : it is factful, not fanciful. It is not quaint or sweet, but hard and rather dreary. You do not smile ; you shiver. This child has been born a changling just as another may have had the misfortune to have been born an idiot, and it tries rather blunderingly, apologetically, and with a touch of bitterness to explain its inevitable fate :—

I meant to stay in bed that night,
And if only you had left a light
They would never have got me out !

Couldn't do my sums, or sing,
Or settle down to anything.
And when, for that, I was sent upstairs
I *did* kneel down to say my prayers ;

“ Ken,” described in the poem of that name,
who “ fidgets so, with his poor wits,” who
seemed, “ an uncouth bird,”

as he ploughed up the street,
Groping, with knarred, high-lifted feet
And arms thrust out as if to beat
Always against a threat of bars.

is another unfortunate. He is not taken by the fairies, but removed by human beings to the “ gabled house facing the Castle wall.” He has an unnatural understanding, and there is no possibility that he will ever conform to the herd-idea of what a man should be. Ken’s removal is little different from his death. No words are wasted on describing its emotional effect. The method of this poem is to stir the reader to great apprehension and then abruptly leave his imagination to follow its own natural course. These are the concluding lines :—

So when they took
Ken to that place, I did not look
After he called and turned on me
His eyes. These I shall see—

The best poetry is the least *poetical*. The force of the imagination that has conceived

it drives forward our own imaginations, and we are often least conscious of it as *Poetry* precisely when we are most moved. We are spared the discomfort of having to exert that critical faculty which generally interferes with enjoyment. Need it be remarked that the language of the best poetry is the nearest to ordinary speech? We are not startled, but we cannot fail to be interested to find "The Quiet House" open with the lines :—

When we were children old Nurse used to say,
The house was like an auction or a fair
Until the lot of us were safe in bed.

The poem makes no apparent effort to intensify our interest. It leads us, however, to such passages (conceived in the same simplicity of style) as :

And if I like him now I do not know.
He frightened me before he smiled—

or

The room is shut where Mother died,
The other rooms are as they were,
The world goes on the same outside,

or

And nothing lives there but the fire,
While Father watches from his chair
Day follow day.

The longest and least easy poem in the book is "Madeleine in Church." A first impression will be that it rambles, but closer examination shows that every detail is essential to the main structure. The study of the type *Madeleine* has provided a subject, of course, for many novelists.

Oh ! I know Virtue, and the peace it brings !

The temperate, well-worn smile

The one man gives you, when you are evermore his
own :

And afterwards the child's, for a little while,

With its unknowing and all-seeing eyes

So soon to change,

Swinburne in hundreds of flowing lines dropped few such stinging comments on the Galilean as *Madeleine* in her halting phrases :—

Then safe, safe are we ? in the shelter of His everlasting wings—

I do not envy Him his victories, His arms are full of broken things !

Her grievance is personal and bitter, being that of a believer :—

I used to think it would not hurt me too, so terribly,

If He had ever seemed to notice me

Or, if, for once, He would only speak.

No argument, or quotation, can prove that the poetry of Charlotte Mew is above the

average of our day. She writes with the naturalness of one whom real passion has excited; her diction is free from artificial conceits, is inspired by the force of its subject, and creates its own direct intellectual contact with the reader. Her phraseology is hard and concentrated. To praise her poetry is to offer homage where it is due; and to recommend it is to desire for others the enjoyment one has oneself experienced.

SECTION II

"I may really say that for a quarter of a century," writes FORD MADOX HUEFFER in the Preface to his *Collected Poems*, "I have kept before me one unflinching aim—to register my own times in terms of my own time."

Mr. Hueffer forgets many things. He is always confessing, even in his poetry, to having forgotten something. For so profound a literary scholar he is remarkably inaccurate. Using two lines from Heine as a text for some of his musings on poetry, he misquotes them, in fact, distorts them. Nevertheless we fully believe that he has kept

that unflinching aim before him, for the fact is revealed in every phase of his development as a poet.

He complains that we English "have a literary jargon in which we must write," while in France a poet "can write in a language that, roughly speaking, any hatter can use," and in Germany "the poet writes exactly as he speaks." "Is there something," he asks, "about the mere framing of a verse, the mere sound of it in the ear, that it must at once throw its practitioner or its devotee into an artificial frame of mind?"

Throughout his career as a poet he has shaken off one after other of the artificialities of which he complains. Much of his earlier poetry is Pseudo-Pre-Raphaelite, but his latest poems are as far from the Pre-Raphaelites as Whitman, say, is from the Elizabethan lyrists. He hates Victorianism as a reformed drunkard may hate whisky.

He has brain, style and vision. But he is an innovator, and the beauty of his poetry will not be fully recognised until it becomes possible, in the future, to look back upon it from a distance. It will be popular when

most of the *Shropshire Lad* is forgotten, we might say—*only* when most of it is forgotten. Moreover it will all be popular: the earlier as well as the later poems. To study his development we have to read his book of Collected Poems backwards, for the order of their collection is inverse to that of their composition; and to understand his aims we should first study, besides the Introduction to this book, his essays published in a volume called *The Critical Attitude*. These were contributed to *The English Review* which he founded in 1909 for the express purpose, he would have us seriously believe, of printing a poem by Mr. Thomas Hardy. He likes these little jokes. They make people feel uncomfortable, which is good for them. He is too serious to take himself seriously. There is no pomp here. "Love in country lanes," he tells us, "the song of birds, moonlight—these the poet, playing for safety, and the critic trying to find something safe to praise, will deem the sure cards of the poetic pack." So, as he does not himself enjoy playing for safety, he resigns these subjects to Mr. A. E. Housman, and others.

Nevertheless his early poems (which should properly be called *songs*) are mostly about the earth and its natural events. In those days he had little control of his subjects. "From time to time," he tells us, "words in verse form have come into my head and I have written them down, quite powerlessly and without much interest, under the stress of certain emotions." In "A Night Piece" he suggests the process :—

As I lay awake by my good wife's side,
And heard the clock tick through a night in June,
I thought of a song with a haunting tune ;

To-day, we venture to believe, he has much more control of his subjects. "It's an odd thing how one changes . . ." he remarks at the opening of "The Starling." The complete change in his method and manner has produced such works as "To All the Dead," and that beautiful poem, with the absurd title, "On Heaven." "*Vers Libre* is a very jolly medium," he tells us in his latest Preface, "in which to write and to read, if it be read conversationally and quietly." The opening passages of "On Heaven" are rhymed and regular, as if for the purpose of

coming to an understanding with a possibly diffident reader ; we then drop the rhymes and settle down into an easy movement in slightly irregular blank verse, breaking off in the middle of a line to introduce the main subject of the poem, at which point regularity becomes discarded, but in no methodless way. There are further passages of blank verse, and there is also a rich interspersion of the kind of galloping hexameter with which the main theme is introduced :—

Until when the years were over, she came in her swift
red car.

The rhythm as a whole is of that conversational sort referred to in the Preface. Rhymes are introduced, quite irregularly as if to serve as occasional *points d'appui* for the attention, and the impression produced is of some one talking rather thoughtlessly and artlessly in a natural way of his own, so that it can be said of Ford Madox Hueffer, as of Ralph Hodgson, that he creates in a personal rhythm and language, and that his voice could not be mistaken for any one else's, nor the voice of any one else for his. So we find in these two writers, the same distinguishing

merits of the original poet, though their manner and method be totally different.

The following is a specimen of one of Hueffer's shortest poems in *vers libre*. The longer poems cannot easily be quoted, but should be read in their entirety.

"WHEN THE WORLD CRUMBLED"

Once there were purple seas—
Wide, wide. . . .
And myrtle-groves and cyclamen,
Above the cliff and the stone pines
Where a god watched. . . .
And thou, oh Lesbian . . .
Well, *that's* all done !



EZRA POUND, as far as we know, has come under the influence of only two living English poets—Ford Madox Hueffer and W. B. Yeats, neither of whom interfered noticeably with his style, whatever their temperamental effect on his personality.

The sources of his inspiration are bookish, and they are undisguised. Original poems are printed side by side with translations, and some are half original and half translation. After the issue of *Personæ* and *Exulta-*

tions in 1909 he wrote *The Spirit of Romance* : “ An attempt to define somewhat the charm of the pre-renaissance literature of Latin Europe.” American, intelligent and arrogant, a most careless scholar but imaginative thinker, he rambles through two hundred and fifty pages of loosely-connected notes on his favourite epoch in European literature. “ I am interested in poetry,” he writes in his *Præfatio ad Lectorem Electum*. “ I have attempted to examine certain forces, elements or qualities which were potent in the mediæval literature of the Latin tongues, and are, as I believe, still potent in our own.”

The intellectual perversity of Ezra Pound has disgusted many of his contemporaries. His influence on the younger poetry of our day is least admitted by many who have been most subject to it. The recognition of his genius will be gradual and tardy, its qualities being, few of them, apparent on the surface, and also because he voluntarily erects a barrier between himself and his readers, and that the standards he has set himself, and the literary obstructions he has himself raised against freedom of the imagina-

tion, have so interfered with his production as to reduce him in present appearance to a mere experimenter in unusual rhythms.

He writes (it is as though he were describing himself) of Arnaut Daniel's "refusal to use the 'journalese' of his day," his "aversion to the obvious, familiar vocabulary," of his discontent with "a conventional phrase, or with a word that does not convey his exact meaning"; that he realised fully "that the music of rhymes depends upon their arrangement, not on their multiplicity." In the forms of his *canzoni* he finds an excellence that can satisfy "not only the modern ear, gluttonous of rhyme, but also the ear trained to Roman and Hellenic music to which rhyme seemed and seems a vulgarity." But his "temperamental sympathy" for the pre-renaissance literature of Latin Europe is little shared by his twentieth-century contemporaries. He learnt his art in the school of the Troubadours.

Recently under the title *Umbra*, he has selected all he now wishes to keep in circulation from his earlier books: *Personæ*, *Exultations*, *Ripostes*, etc. Glancing down the

table of contents we find, among others, the following titles :—

La Fraisine; Cino; Na Audiart; Villonaud for this Yule; Marvail; Sestina: Altaforte; Aux Belles de Londres; Alba; Planh; N. Y.; Δώρια. Such internationalistic nomenclature will not fail from the outset to irritate the reader, however well-disposed. The beauties of his poetry are disguised among intricacies and wilful complications. Yet, read "Praise of Ysolt." Here is the opening :—

In vain have I striven,
to teach my heart to bow;
In vain have I said to him
"There be many singers greater than thou."

But his answer cometh, as winds and as lutany,
As a vague crying upon the night
That leaveth me no rest, saying ever.
"Song, a song."

Read "Δώρια" or "The Return": both finished specimens of the art of free verse.

THE RETURN

See, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one;
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
 and half turn back;
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"
 Inviolable.

Gods of the wingèd shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
 sniffing the trace of the air!

Haie! Haie!

 These were the swift to harry;
These the keen-scented;
These were the souls of blood.

Slow on the leash,
 pallid the leash-men!

In other books a strong influence of Chinese poetry takes its place. Among the Latins Catullus is a predominant source, among the Germans, Heine, and several modern French writers have been carefully studied. Further a "pact" with Walt Whitman releases his imagination for a number of lively poems in free verse in which he ridicules contemporary habits and persons:—

I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman—
I have detested you long enough.
I come to you as a grown child
Who has had a pig-headed father;
I am old enough now to make friends.

The series of translations from the Chinese entitled *Cathay* is composed in plain lucid English running in harmonious rhythms, and conveys to the average western mind an extraordinarily clear picture of such a China as travellers and native art have led it to imagine.

- Ezra Pound peppers nearly all his writings with archaisms, exoticisms, foreign words ancient and modern, wilful obscurities, and gibes at people less gifted than himself. His very latest poems have the obscurity without the wit or natural intelligence of a Browning.

He seldom misses an opportunity of casting a stone at the "old bitch gone in the teeth"—this "botched civilisation" of ours, or, figuratively, of pelting his contemporaries with paper darts, at which, when they do not laugh, but are irritated, he himself becomes the angrier. He seems to have made himself a permanent resident in England, and all his works have been published here, but his intellect has never become acclimatised. Nor, apparently, has he decided whether finally to consider himself a romantic or a realist. Miraut de Garzelas, the "grave

councillor " of his " La Fraisine " cast aside
" the yoke of the old ways of men," finding
comfort " by the still pool of Mar-nan-otha."

But I have seen the sorrow of men, and am glad,
For I know that the wailing and bitterness are a folly.
And I? I have put aside all folly and all grief.

Ezra Pound himself has not learnt the folly
of bitterness.



It is related that when a young countryman
of Pound's, arriving in England, visited the
master with specimens of his work, Pound
sat for long at the table in deep consideration
of a certain poem, and at length, glancing up,
remarked: " It took you ninety-seven words
to do it; I find it could have been managed
in fifty-six."

It has often been thought and said that
Ezra Pound was the originator of the
" Imagist " school, which has flourished better
in the U.S.A. than in Great Britain. In
1913 we find him, side by side with F. S. FLINT,
contributing to an American magazine certain
articles on the theories of the school. Pound's
contribution is entitled " A Few Don'ts by an

Imagiste." They contain such useful advice as "Don't think any intelligent person is going to be deceived when you try to shirk all the difficulties of the unspeakably difficult art of good prose by chopping your composition into line lengths." But F. S. Flint, in the *Egoist* for May 1915, produces facts and dates to show that the movement had its origin in the formation in 1908 of a certain "Poets' Club" (still in existence as a pseudo-fashionable dining-club), and in many subsequent conversations among T. E. Hulme, Edward Storer, F. W. Tancred, Joseph Campbell, himself, and some others, and that Ezra Pound, in fact, joined the group considerably later.

For many years T. E. Hulme (who was killed in the European War), was one of the central figures of a fluctuating group of poets and philosophers. His "Complete Poetical Works," consisting of five poems, are printed at the end of Pound's *Umbræ*. "Autumn" may fittingly be quoted here, for it is said to have been one of the first strictly "Imagist" poems produced, that is, without loss of imaginative impulse, it conforms to the

principles laid down at the early meetings of the group at a Soho restaurant :—

AUTUMN

A touch of cold in the Autumn night—
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.

F. S. Flint's first book of poems, *In the Net of the Stars*, precedes the movement so far as concerns its style. It is less studied and more poetical than his later volume. He writes: "I have grown tired of the old measures wherein I beat my song." Nevertheless he uses rhymed quatrains and rhymed couplets and several other conventional measures with striking originality. Like many young poets he is over-troubled with the burden of self-consciousness, and his writing is too much in the First Person. But he desires freedom from self :—

I have a mind to be more simple than
The twisted, racked, illusioned mind of man.

His love-poems are of great beauty and he has a cool, tender adoration for the natural

objects of earth and sky. These early verses are nearly *cliché-free*. The chief influences are Ezra Pound (slight), W. B. Yeats, and Solomon. He has a curiously profound understanding of race-memory, the idea of Eternity, and the natural growth of human flesh out of the soil, and he prophesies a future in which "there shall be a greater concourse of the peoples,"

And they shall move along the banks of the rivers,
And the shores of the seas.

And they shall make a new Book of golden beautiful
words,
Wherein shall be set the spirit of all the flowers and
grasses,
And the many-summited trees.

Ford Madox Hueffer early recognised Flint's talent and printed a considerable selection from his poems in *The English Review*. Since those days he has busied himself much with the theory of poetry, and has devoted himself to the study of modern French literature, of which he has become an expert critic. It is not, therefore, surprising to find the poems in his second volume, *Otherworld*, preceded by a Preface, which opens with the startling sentence :—

There is only one art of writing, and that is the art poetry; and, wherever you feel the warmth of human experience and imagination in any writing, there is poetry, whether it is in the form we call prose, or in rhyme and metre, or in the unrhymed cadence in which the greater part of this book is written.

It should here be remarked that modern poets of the type of F. S. Flint are no longer "visited by the Muses": they are not at home to them. It will be no use to say that their poetry "does not sing." It is not meant to. The word *Song* has been abandoned and swept out with Ode, Sonnet, Quatrain and other similar verbal lumber. The test of Intellect is more important to them than the tests of prosody, or tradition. The passing event and its effect on the mind is everything to them. They prefer a single word or phrase that may accurately register an impression to a line that will be quoted for the loveliness of its verbal construction. Thus they think in terms of the whole poem rather than of the single line, and thus they are often unquotable except *in extenso*.

It would be only natural if the average reader of poetry should fail at first, and

without certain definite application of the mind, to apprehend the beauty and profundity of these essentially modern poems, and to mistake them for "prose chopped into line lengths." It would be well for those who come to them with the rhythms and rhymes of such poets as Swinburne or A. E. Housman still ringing in their ears to bear in mind two points :—

(1) In poetry, a new idea, or an individual method of thought, creates its own new form, style or cadence (*e. g.* The Faerie Queene; Shakespeare's plays; Paradise Lost; Don Juan; Leaves of Grass).

(2) The author of *Otherworld*, having no intention of "singing" his works should be explored with other objects than that of trying to force them to "sing." Their salient qualities are sincerity, naturalness, and a certain instinctive universal wisdom.



Although RICHARD ALDINGTON was a later addition to the Imagist group yet early in his own career he came under Imagist influences, and he has consistently used the

title "Image" in connection with his poetry. Like those of H.D. most of his poems have an Hellenic background. His rhythms do not seem to follow any specified rule or sequence; they form irregular patterns dictated by the emotional impulse of any particular poem. The substance of his later poetry is deeply affected by long and horrifying experiences in the European War. Except Siegfried Sassoon, no "war-poet" has represented the torments of military life with such candour and so entirely without bombastic rhetoric :—

DISDAIN

Have the gods then left us in our need
Like base and common men?
Were even the sweet grey eyes
Of Artemis a lie,
The speech of Hermes but a trick,
The glory of Apollonian hair deceit?
Desolate we move across a desolate land,
The high gates closed,
No answer to our prayer;
Naught left save our integrity,
No murmur against Fate
Save that we are juster than the unjust gods,
More pitiful than they.

Discussions concerning Form are often interesting but, in general, supererogatory.

Many contend that a definite and recognisable form is essential to every metrical composition. Others reply that the whole emotional significance of a certain kind of poetry depends on its freedom from the limitations of a fixed and imposed artificial pattern, or, if we refer the question, as we reasonably may, to sound-values, of a *tune*. Poetry, they say, is not the trick of fitting words to a certain pre-conceived sound-melody, but it is the expression of personal emotion in a manner as nearly as possible corresponding to its own character and value.

Like Flint, Richard Aldington has invented many devices aimed at expressing the sharp contrasts and incongruities of modern life. He has not by any means finally rejected the use of rhyme: in his *Images of Desire* it occurs often; nor has he yet freed himself from early influences. Memories of Swinburne butt in rudely and unexpectedly in such phrases as,

To feel her moving heart, to taste
Her breath like wine . . .

We hope he has the force of character to develop to its full a style at present scarcely

formed. His poverty of adjectival qualification is conspicuous. Simple, indeed, but insufficient, are such words as cold, lithe, silver, fiery, white, clear, dull, cruel, pale, delicate, glad, sombre, wan, slow, fierce, frail, thick, faint. He relies also to excess on the mere mention of colours.

There is a brain behind his poetry, perhaps too much brain, too much "labour to appear skilful." Intellect is the servant of poetry, but a dangerous servant, apt to interfere. His rhythms mostly lack the "absolute music" so many readers desire and expect. The brain is too much a master and not yet sufficiently a comrade of the imagination. He is an intellectual cynic, yet he writes :—

My spirit follows after the gliding clouds,
And my lips murmur of the mother of beauty
Standing breast-high, in golden broom
Among the blue pine-woods !



Discussion has centred hotly round H.D. (Hilda Doolittle). The Imagists one and all champion her verse, and never tire of representing it as the perfection of this modern style, and contrasting it favourably with the

verse of many of her more prolific contemporaries. Her production, indeed, is very slight and her subjects hardly extend beyond flowers, trees, gardens, orchards, Greek gods, and the sea. She resembles Aldington only in her selection of an Hellenic background; unlike him, she remains to outward appearance uninfluenced by French poetry, and no display of philosophy or cynicism interferes with the even tenour of her compositions.

We are tempted to wonder what Swinburne would have thought of H.D. had he considered her worth his notice. If we compare him to a great moving ocean, then she becomes a still and narrow creek with wooded shores.

Here is an example of excessive restraint. This poem, like the "Autumn" of T. E. Hulme already quoted, may be considered an ideal specimen of Imagist theory and practice :—

OREAD

Whirl up, sea—
Whirl your pointed pines,
Splash your great pines
On our rocks,
Hurl your green over us,
Cover us with your pools of fir.

The word *temperamental* qualifies the whole manner and substance of her verse, and the degree of the reader's appreciation will depend on the amount of natural sympathy with which he temperamentally can approach it.

H.D. has successfully avoided all commerce with that "literary jargon" of which Mr. Hueffer complains, but she is equally far from writing "in a language that, roughly speaking, any hatter can use," and infinitely far from registering her own time in terms of her own time. Nor, so much as we know, has she ever used sonnet or stanza forms, and once or twice only has she dabbled in rhyme. Her art is to mould ideas and images into sequences of word-groups; it is an art of suggestion, of inference, seldom of direct statement: it is an art always, never a craft. Let us support these statements by quotation:—

They say there is no hope—
sand—drift—rocks—rubble of the sea—
the broken hulk of a ship,
hung with shreds of rope,
pallid under the cracked pitch.

· · · · ·
O wind, rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat,
rend it to tatters.

Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air—

The house, too, was like this,
over painted, over lovely—
the world is like this.

The affinity of her art to the radical characteristics of her own time is to be found, then, not in choice of subject but in the following characteristics: She has rejected the traditional forms of English poetry in favour of a personal rhythm which derives its impulse from such rules as her own temperament may dictate. Poetry is to her an art to be cultivated, not an inspired message to be conveyed. Bulk of production is of no importance to her as compared with excellence of finish. She makes no apparent attempt to teach, or to proselytise.

Before leaving her, the last lines of a beautiful poem called "Cities" should be quoted:—

Though we wander about,
find no honey of flowers in this waste,
is our task the less sweet—
who recall the old splendour,
await the new beauty of cities?



The French expression *vers libre* is still often used to designate lines of uneven and arbitrary length though of regular structure, such as were employed in most of his later poetry by Verhaeren. Gustave Kahn widened the definition both in theory and practice; Mallarmé stretched it several points further; Claudel and others have worked patiently on rhythm structure; with the late Guillaume Apollinaire and others a mischievous instinct for destruction set in: they exhibited a desire to smash up the whole idea of verse-form.

Free Verse has not been clearly understood in England. It is the most difficult medium that a poet can employ: it has been used with success a few dozen times only. Yet many dozens of incompetent persons have sought an appearance of originality by adopting the practice of jotting down odds and ends of stray thought, and having them printed as though they were lines of free poetry. The idea also of creating a word-pattern has appealed to persons incapable of constructing a well-balanced literary sentence.



FREDERIC MANNING is a scholar and writer of fine ironical prose. His formal verse is chiefly commonplace, but where, under the stress of Imagist influence and war feelings, he has loosed the fetters and written simply as the mood dictated, he has at once become more genuine and less derivative. Yet he has not mastered the difficulties of free verse.

Sing, thou great wind; smite the harp of the wood,
For in thee the souls of slain men are singing exultant,
Now free of the air, feather-footed! Yea, they swim
therein

Toward the green twilight, surging
Naked and beautiful with playing muscles,
Yea, even the naked souls of men
Whose beauty is a fierce thing, and slayeth us
Like the terrible majesty of the gods;
Blow, thou great wind, scatter the yellowing leaves.



HERBERT READ showed promise when dealing with war-subjects, and his poems, in spite of their jagged, halting style, are more vivid and readable than the sentimental rhymes of many of his contemporary soldier-poets.

THE HAPPY WARRIOR

His wild heart beats with painful sobs,
His strained hands clench an ice-cold rifle,
His aching jaws grip a hot parched tongue,
And his wide eyes search unconsciously.

He cannot shriek.
Bloody saliva
Dribbles down his shapeless jacket.
I saw him stab
And stab again
A well-killed Boche.
This is the happy warrior,
This is he. . . .



An examination of various attempts to compose free verse emphasises the general misunderstanding of its method and object. SUSAN MILES, however, has written a pleasant little book called *Dunch*, in which she describes the queer characters and incidents of a village life, scenes from childhood, and psychological experiences, jotting them down in the following style :—

I like the butcher being not " the butcher,"
But Tom Crisp,
Old Crisp with the wooden leg's son ;
And I like the baker's boy being not " the baker's boy,"
But Wag Fretter,
Who was such a sickly babe
That his mother never would have reared him,
Not without she'd yummered him all roads.
I like the driver of the *Wheatsheaf* brougham
Being not " the driver,"
But Jonathan Arthur,

Whose five pretty daughters
I have seen successively emerge
From sturdy childhood
Into slender, sedate and slim-ankled modernity.

That she can also write charming rhymes is proved in the second part of her book. Plainly she was wise not to select the style of a Crabbe or a Bloomfield for her modern rural poems. Yet does the following sentence gain by being "chopped" into apparent verse-lengths?

Boxes, outfits, passports, consuls, interviews,
Medical examinations, sortings, storings,
And all the multifarious externals of departure
Have whirled me unintrospectively from point to vibrant
point
Through long, packed, urgent days.

Novelty apart, is the style of any of her descriptive passages improved by her manner of writing them down? The experiment may afford temporary amusement, for she is witty and observant. Yet the critical reader will only suspect her, and her like, of lacking the patience or leisure for mastering the difficult task of expressing themselves in clear and straightforward prose.



As we pass down the scale of "free verse," we note with progressive interest the modern passion for tearing to pieces, out of a spirit of obstinate mischief. MAX WEBER, in his *Cubist Poems*, tries many amusing experiments. He dismantles his own emotions, the feelings of others, landscapes, town-views, articles of domestic service, and finally language itself, as if all of these were various forms of mechanical toy.

My doubts are my events,
My events are my hopes,
And events out of doubts happen,
And doubt after doubt new events through hope happens.
Repetition is my doubt.
Again,
A thought, a deed, a pause, a call,
An hour, a year,
A life
A joy, a sorrow,
All time, all being, all mood,
All is doubt for more hope,
All is hope,
And all that happens are but new doubts in new hopes.



And finally JOHN RODKER, poring over the town for subjects, discovers the London sparrow :—

TO THE LONDON SPARROWS

Gamins.
Drab and
Cockney.
Wavering
but not much
between feeding and
. . . !

Thriftless.
Laying up children. . . .
Dung growing less too.
What will become of you.
Your four broods yearly. . . .
(or is it oftener.)

Will you go back to the country. . . .
Corrupt poor relations. . . .

Do not think, reader, that these last quotations are representative of modern tendencies in poetry, or meant as a free advertisement for their perpetrators. On the other hand, do believe that their spirit is more representative of modern civilisations than ever the studied rhymes of those young bloods who follow closely on the traditions of the best poetry, ignoring the trend of real life. Unsuccessful experiment is far more interesting than successful imitation. Seed grows to flower. Style and form and "good taste"

are conspicuously avoided in the life and public works of to-day. Nor can literature be expected to abide closely by the rules of another age. Seriousness may be of several kinds, and a serious attempt to delineate the spirit of our own time will adopt no puritanical attitude toward the ugliness of that spirit. Nor will a work on the poetry of to-day overlook the tendencies of which an outline has been traced in the foregoing Section.

SECTION III

I would that to the world would come again
That indignation, that anger of the Lord,
Which once was known among us men.

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE is almost without lyrical impulse. A turgid blank verse is his medium. But in "Indignation: an Ode," from which the above lines are quoted, and in the "Ceremonial Ode, intended for a University," he displays a force of lyric and heroic ecstasy extremely rare in modern poetry.

His normal moods are cloudy and speculative. His poems in narrative and dramatic form are long and frequently tedious. Every

detail is laboured into yet further detail. He has the imagination of a chess-player; he moves his dramatic characters through their parts with the cautious deliberation of one engaged in a long game of chess.

Under these circumstances an equivalent patience and deliberation is required in his readers. A poem so dramatically vivid as his early "Sale of St. Thomas" presents few such difficulties. Its speed of psychological action has not been equalled in any of its successors. It led Abercrombie's admirers to attribute to him greater powers than he has since shown.

Is he, then, himself a victim to that prudence against which Thomas is cautioned?

Now, Thomas, know thy sin. It was not fear;
Easily may a man crouch down for fear,
And yet rise up on firmer knees, and face
The hailing storm of the world with graver courage.
But prudence, prudence is the deadly sin,
And one that groweth deep into a life,
With hardening roots that clutch about the breast.
For this refuses faith in the unknown powers
Within man's nature; shrewdly bringeth all
Their inspiration of strange eagerness
To judgment bought by safe experience;
Narrows desire into the scope of thought.

Deborah : a Play in three Acts is altogether stage-worthy, and shows that the author does actually possess vivid powers of dramatic presentation. No other of his dramatic pieces is written with the same sharp attention to the inevitable psychological development of each separate character. The persons of his literary plays argue introspectively about themselves, psycho-analytically about each other, and didactically about things outside themselves, at such length and with such verbosity and wealth of explanatory detail, that the dramatic interest too often disperses itself in a mere vapour of excessive verbiage. A sound qualifying knowledge of metaphysics and philosophy is required of his characters, however humble ; and they speak the intricate close-packed or overflowing verse which is their progenitor's sole language. They are made to wind their way through speeches as long as two hundred and fifty lines, and to utter sentences as complicated as the following :—

Now what the Gods would make
Of Man shatters, the subtle singleness,
The new rare thing their skill, spanning all life,
Had sometime won from its diverseness, as we

From many wires a tune ; and though Man stopt,
In divine memories had linger'd on
That wonder of humanity, at last
A just psaltery, toucht into a song.

The author shows a consciousness of his own defects when in *Emblems of Love* he makes King Ahasuerus exclaim to the Poet :—

Thou hast a night, man, not a week to tell them.
You men of words, dealers in breath, conceit
Too bravely of yourselves ;

Edward Thomas wrote of Abercrombie's blank verse that "the march or leap or stagger or crawl or hesitation of the syllables correspond to varying emotions with thrilling delicacy." Most of the competent critics have praised him. The public has shown a keen interest in him : yet his books remain in their first editions.

It is surprising that he should not have arrived at a decision as to whether to turn his powers definitely to drama or to narrative, or indeed epic. It is clear that he is not, and will never become, a lyrical poet.

His most striking characteristic, particularly as compared with others of his generation, is a strong preference for objectivity.

I spoke of Life as one broad tissued thing,
A whole, seamless and woven right across.
You, when you speak of life, mean still—Yourself.

His imagination is vigorous, but brain-fettered. It could move with more freedom, if allowed. He has a strong and learned mind. It overburdens his characters, but occasionally, in spite of his restraining influence and the complexities of their verse, they express themselves freely and with dramatic intensity :—

I made of my desires not ecstasy
But lust ; as rooms of mere delight
I lived in passions, not seeing that they were
Porches only into wonder, and made
To be past through, but not inhabited.
And like a deadly climate they have grieved
And spoilt my nature, crept into my marrow,
And made intolerable wrong in my soul.

Perhaps he will become a dramatist.



Most of GORDON BOTTOMLEY's plays have been locked up for many years in small expensive editions, some limited even to as few as 120 copies. Meanwhile such critics as Dixon Scott, Edward Thomas, Arthur Waugh, and Lascelles Abercrombie were writing en-

thusiastic descriptions of them in the Press. So that a reputation was founded on books that scarcely any people had read, and the well-informed spoke in hushed tones together of these mysterious inaccessible works of art.

On the half-title of the collected edition that has now been issued the inscription appears, "Remember the life of these things consists in action." This reminder has a curious effect. If it be received as a dictum, the strange ghosts that move about Gordon Bottomley's stage become invested with an uncanny reality: they become living ghosts, and their old fierce world is half revived, at all events, as an artistic reality.

Hallgerd in "The Riding to Lithend," while referring to the Irish, describes in general terms the existence of such characters:—

that strange soil
Where men by day walk with unearthly eyes
And cross the veils of the air, and are not men
But fierce abstractions eating their own hearts
Impatiently and seeing too much to be joyful. . . .

Also a passage in "Laodice and Danaë" is typical of the haunted shadowy atmosphere in which all this action is cast:—

Ah . . . h, nothing, nothing. Something will not happen,
And let this life go on again. Nothing.
Yet . . . yet . . . the air is beating on my temples
As though a rabble murmured beyond hearing.

Thus, again, Danaë addresses a child :—

the old silence of palaces
Is settling on you steadily. Your crying
Is shut within—and shall be farther enclosed.

The action of this play is “ In Smyrna, 246 B.C.,” of “ The Riding to Lithend,” “ In Iceland, A.D. 990 ” ; “ Midsummer Eve ” takes place “ a long time ago ” : all of them belong to periods of rushlights and braziers, dark long shadows and vengeance by night. They present the spectacle of human beings playing their fated rôles with unerring accuracy of detail, and in accordance with a sub-conscious knowledge of the issue. On the threshold of doom Hallgerd addresses his old mother :—

Come here and hearken. Is there not a foot,
A stealthy step, a fumbling on the latch
Of the great door ? They come, they come, old mother :
Are you not blithe and thirsty, knowing they come
And cannot be held back ? Watch and be secret,
To feel things pass that cannot be undone.

Gordon Bottomley's invention of a subsidiary plot to the drama of Lear, a kind of prologue to Shakespeare's tragedy, was daring

but ingenious. In "King Lear's Wife" he reaches his supreme achievement in the representation of primitive gloom. The persons are all groping backward and forward and round-about, in the web of a Fate they cannot possibly hope to understand.

He weaves mysteriously into his elemental plots psychological intricacies that seem modern because they are ancient, and that are neither actually ancient nor modern, because they are universal. His plays are more definitely suited to the modern stage than any that the younger contemporary poets have written. But they need such a reformed stage as Craig and others have dreamed, but not had the executive power to create.

Gordon Bottomley is not solely a dramatic poet. His "End of the World" and "Babel: the Gate of God," though amounting together to not more than 150 lines, have an emotional content proportionate to full-length epics. And the poems that are only lyrical, packed into their two slim tiny volumes, contain certain passages of striking beauty.

Thus man is shaped to lift his arms on high
And tends to adoration as to breathe.

But it is chiefly as a dramatic poet that he is conspicuous among the moderns. Doubtless a reformed stage will soon discover him. Let us hope that, side by side with his shorter plays, it will produce the great dramas of Michael Field.



WILFRID WILSON GIBSON has published a bewildering quantity of small volumes. He is more facile than most of his contemporaries, but his mind has not sufficient range to justify that facility. His vocabulary is not large, and his employment of such as he possesses not remarkably unusual. It is plain, however, that his purpose is to write simply and truly, and that experiments with fine-sounding words do not interest him.

In 1902 the case was different. We have but to open *The Queen's Vigil* to find at once such lines as "Drank the rose-fragrant air like wine," or "Dew-laden censers in the air," or "Your brimming rapture of deep peace to drink." In 1904 we find him writing intolerably dull blank verse. In 1907 an interesting development of his talent is beginning, and we can follow it, phase by phase, through

each of his books down to to-day. After Wordsworth's example, he is now taking as much pains to avoid what is usually called "poetic diction" as he had previously taken to produce it. His blank verse is dull as before, but the manner of its use redeems it somewhat, and its identifiable purpose helps us to read it. He writes little plays about Northumbrian shepherds and watermen, types that he had the full chance of studying through the earlier years of his life. They speak in this manner :—

Nicholas. Is Ralph there?

Rachel. Nay, he's gone back to the fold.

Nicholas. If only I might go with him ! It's strange
The year's lambs should be born and I not
there.

The labouring ewes will miss my hand
to-night ;

Though Ralph's a careful fellow, he is
young ;

And six-and-fifty lambings have I seen.

It's hard, it's hard that I sit crippled here
When there's so much to do—so much
to do !

These dreariest of iambic pentameters are entirely unlike the talk of peasants. Their object may be to reproduce the sad monotony

of that shepherd life, but their effect is to dull the mind of the reader. Such blank verse as this cannot be a fit medium for dramatic speech. The author seems to have realised it himself, for in the similar but longer series of little dramas entitled *Daily Bread* he breaks up the dialogue into lines of uneven length. Here, for instance, a delirious stoker describes his furnace :—

I feed, and feed, and feed it,
And yet it's never full ;
And always gaping, gaping,
And licking its red lips.
I feed it with my shovel,
All night long.
I shovel without ceasing ;
And it just licks the coke up in a twinkling,
And roars, and roars for more.

For these plays he constructed a manner that he has often used again.

In the series of tales published under the title *Fires* he returns to rhyme and employs an enlarged vocabulary, at the same time developing the rhythmical schemes of *Daily Bread*. As a writer of stories in verse he is not as accomplished as his contemporary John Masefield. Another of his contempo-

aries is charged with having described him as "Masefield without the *Damns*."

The best of the poems in the story-telling vein are probably those entitled "Solway Ford" and "Wheels," which were printed in *Thoroughfares* (1914). Here economy and concentration are practised, qualities which had not hitherto been conspicuous. In this book also he returns to the lyric.

Battle (1915) contains lyrical transcriptions of the individual experiences of fighting-men, partly based on tales brought back to him by people from overseas, or on newspaper accounts of such experiences, and partly on the deductions of a tortured imagination brooding on the conditions of modern fighting and the irony of the soldier's lot.

Friends and other books have since appeared. But he has not increased his reputation as a lyric poet. It is probable that his talent is rather dramatic than lyrical or narrative, but it is doubtful whether his mind has the freedom and impartiality necessary for dramatic characterisation.



SIR RONALD ROSS hardly belongs to the younger generation of poets. But his development is late, and, being unknown among the elder, he may well be introduced briefly into this section. John Masefield wrote of his series of poems entitled *Philosophies*, "It is magnificent. . . . I know nothing like it. . . . 'Philosophies' will, I feel sure, alter the direction of intellectual energy throughout the land."

Such unintelligible errors of judgment are often committed by men of benevolent disposition. The *Philosophies* are worthless. But lately Ronald Ross has published (with a promise of a further series) certain dramas in miniature entitled *Psychologies*. These are described as "Studies of character and emotion during brief, but intensely dramatic, moments." They are experiments of a most unusual kind in "potted drama." If their author can maintain the same level of interest in his further series he will take his place among the inventors of new and remarkable dramatic forms.

Quotation would be like tearing out a few hairs from the head of a Fury. The inherent

difficulty of creating them, and, in contrast, the apparent ease with which these brief dramatic scenes are developed, can be appreciated alone by reading them in their entirety.

They have not the detailed subtlety of Gordon Bottomley's plays, nor the laborious intricacy of Abercrombie's literary dramas, nor the ingenuous simplicity of W. W. Gibson : on account of their difference they are pre-eminently interesting in the development of dramatic literature.

SECTION IV

ALDOUS HUXLEY is among the most promising of the youngest generation of contemporary poets. He has a brilliant intellect, rare force of imagination, command of language, subtle penetration, irony and style; and the progress of his development has been rapid from the beginning. Keats has influenced him slightly : otherwise he owes little to any particular dead or living English poet. But his debt to French literature is unmistakable, and we do also notice an occasional hint of German influence. Some

of the earlier poems, such as "The Canal" in *The Burning Wheel*, read more like translations than originals, so effectually has the style of the best kind of French sonnet imposed itself on his temperament.

The gloomy or sarcastic impatience of these first poems is gradually modified in later ones.

I had been sitting alone with books,
Till doubt was a black disease,

We can sympathise with that. It is one kind of trouble. Another kind is expressed in "The Ideal Found Wanting." He shouts, "Damn the whole crowd of you! I hate you all!" and "I'll break a window through my prison!" but, true child of his time, he finds there is nothing much to be done; that he must tolerate more or less; that making a fuss is generally equivalent to looking ridiculous :—

Is it escape? No, the laugh's turned on me!
I kicked at cardboard, gaped at red limelight;
You laughed and cheered my latest knockabout.

His third trouble is that he can't control his feelings: "And oh, the pains of sentiment!" It seems not quite decent, and truly not pleasant, to give way to natural

feeling in the disgusting surroundings of the present world.

On the verge of becoming a lover he suddenly calls in scholarship to provide him with an analogy :—

And when I kissed or felt her fingers press,
I envied not Demosthenes his Greek,
Nor Tully for his Latin eloquence.

Creating an imaginary garden he exclaims :
“ I insist on cypresses,” and adds quickly :
“ I’m terribly romantic.” In the forest he notes the following :—

And on the beech-bole, smooth and grey,
Some lover of an older day
Has carved in time-blurred lettering
One word only :—“ Alas.”

He takes Amoret with him to “ live free,” but she, as might have been expected, prefers the town, and tells him so.

On the civilised mind he passes the following comment :—

We’re German scholars poring over life,
As over a Greek manuscript that’s torn
And stained beyond repair. Our eyes of horn
Read one or two poor letters ; and what strife,
What books on books begotten for their sake !

“The Walk” is a brilliant poem. Though not without indications of its writer’s youthfulness, it introduces a new style into English literature.

“The Defeat of Youth,” the title poem of the second work, was apparently intended to form a narrative, but it is not more than a loosely united sonnet sequence. The fifth sonnet may be quoted in its entirety, in spite of a Wordsworthian flavour. It is a model of clarity and condensation.

One spirit it is that stirs the fathomless deep
Of human minds, that shakes the elms in storm,
That sings in passionate music, or on warm
Still evenings bosoms forth the tufted sleep
Of thistle-seeds that wait a travelling wind.
One spirit shapes the subtle rhythms of thought
And the long thundering seas; the soul is wrought
Of one stuff with the body—matter and mind
Woven together in so close a mesh
That flowers may blossom into a song, that flesh
May strangely teach the loveliest holiest things
To watching spirits. Truth is brought to birth
Not in some vacant heaven: its beauty springs
From the dear bosom of material earth.

He is not now so afraid of giving Beauty (figuratively) a big B, nor so shy in the presence of trees, flowers and the other conventional properties of nature-poetry. He

need not fear to fall into the ordinary tricks of the poetaster. Much thought has rendered him proof against them. He can even use the words "illimitable," "imperishable," "inscrutable," "reverberated," "methinks" and "imperturbable" without much detriment to the force of his own style. Now he indulges in some pleasant free verse jottings. He also renders Mallarmé and Rimbaud into his own language.

"Leda" is the most finished poem that Huxley has yet written; a sensual and brightly coloured representation of the episode from mythology. Here is a passage from the description of the god's survey of the earth from Olympus in search of lustful pastime:—

There lay the world, down through the chasmèd blue,
Stretched out from edge to edge unto his view;
And in the midst, bright as a summer's day
At breathless noon, the Mediterranean lay;
And Ocean round the world's dim fringes tossed
His glaucous waves in mist and distance lost;
And Pontus and the livid Caspian Sea
Stirred in their nightmare sleep uneasily.
And 'twixt the seas rolled the wide fertile land,
Dappled with green and tracts of tawny sand,
And rich, dark fallows and fields of flowers aglow
And the white, changeless silences of snow;

While here and there towns, like a living eye
Unclosed on earth's blind face, towards the sky
Glanced their bright conscious beauty. Yet the sight
Of his fair earth gave him but small delight
Now in his restlessness : its beauty could
Do nought to quench the fever in his blood.

Here he spies Leda :—

Many a thousand had he looked upon,
Thousands of mortals, young and old ; but none—
Virgin, or young ephebus, or the flower
Of womanhood culled in its full-blown hour—
Could please the Thunderer's sight or touch his mind ;
The longed-for loveliness was yet to find.
Had beauty fled, and was there nothing fair
Under the moon ? The fury of despair
Raged in the breast of heaven's Almighty Lord ;
He gnashed his foamy teeth and rolled and roared
In bull-like agony. Then a great calm
Descended on him : cool and healing balm
Touched his immortal fury. He had spied
Young Leda where she stood, poised on the river-side.

The art of Aldous Huxley is developing in three directions. The verse of "Leda" is orthodox, but the style of the poem is new, its diction original, and its language personal. Then he writes poetry of a very modern type : style and content both "shocking." Lastly he is using a condensed prose, intricately and cleverly fashioned ; far more satisfactory than the free verse of most of his

contemporaries. Of this the series entitled "Beauty" is perhaps the best example, especially Number VIII.



The Muse in Arms, an anthology made by a well-known English journalist, contains war-poems by fifty-two different writers; another similar collection is made up of forty-seven, and a third (published in America) admits over one hundred and fifty names. The first of these includes only two poems by SIEGFRIED SASSOON; the second, none, and the third again two. His war-poetry does not conform to the popular standard. It is not "patriotic"; it is not in the tradition; it has no parallel. It blows no loud bugles, nor spouts any vapour of sentimental heroics. It accepts the European War at face value, records facts, disguising none, and in a positively insolent manner avoids the mode and style of the orthodox war-poets. Its language and diction are of this war only, the former including most of the new expressions (wangle; gone West; old son; dud; get a move on; blazing crump; dug-out;

Blighty wound) and the latter coinciding with the manner and rhythm of colloquial speech.

War Poems, as a book, is the product of violent disgust, which rises to a crisis of anger and then subsides into a mood of intolerant resignation. He describes soldiers at dawn :—

Dim, gradual thinning of the shapeless gloom
Shudders to drizzling daybreak that reveals
Disconsolate men who stamp their sodden boots
And turn dulled, sunken faces to the sky
Haggard and hopeless. They, who have beaten down
The stale despair of night, must now renew
Their desolation in the truce of dawn,
Murdering the livid hours that grope for peace.

or

Crouching in cabins candle-chinked with light.

or

Old soldiers with three winters in their bones
or the soldier's circumstances and his attitude
to them :—

To-night he's in the pink; but soon he'll die.
And still the war goes on; *he* don't know why.

He reports fighting: the "big bombardment . . . rumbling and bumping," or "volleying doom for doom"; the "bristling fire"; the barrage which "roars and

lifts"; the tanks that "creep and topple forward to the wire," and the battle that "winks and thuds in blundering strife."

He notes the attitude toward fighting :—

To-morrow we must go
To take some Cursèd wood . . . O world God made!

He records the hopelessness of it :—

And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,
Flounders in mud. O Jesu, make it stop!

or again :—

Rain had fallen the whole damned night.
O Jesus, send me a wound to-day,
And I'll believe in Your bread and wine,
And get my bloody old sins washed white!

He depicts death :—

 none heeded him; he choked
And fought the flapping veils of smothering gloom,
Lost in a blurred confusion of yells and groans . . .
Down, and down, and down, he sank and drowned,
Bleeding to death. The counter-attack had failed.

He reflects on death :—

Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with blood.
O German mother dreaming by the fire,
While you are knitting socks to send your son
His face is trodden deeper in the mud.

He jokes about it :—

Good-bye, old lad! Remember me to God,

He is violently ironically bitter about it :—

" How many dead ? As many as ever you wish.

Don't count 'em ; they're too many.

Who'll buy my nice fresh corpses, two a penny ? "

Then he asks the enlightened person to make quite sure it shall not happen again :—

Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.

He is the personification of the intellectual attitude toward modern warfare. Those " low-jargoning men " who were temporary soldiers haunt him, and they swarm through his book querying every detail of that Fate which, against most of their feelings, made of them something new, incongruous, in every way at variance with intellectual ideals. He loves them passionately :—

They smote my heart to pity, built my pride.

He tries to revolt, and extract himself from the whole situation :—

Love drove me to rebel.

Love drives me back to grope with them through hell ;
And in their tortured eyes I stand forgiven.

He scourges the Staff, and the Press, and the Government, and sentimental women,

and vaguely charitable people, and the Church. In his sincerity he rises occasionally to such a high pitch of "bad taste" that we wonder he was tolerated by the almighty powers above him.

Various plain-speaking books have appeared on the subject of that recent disgusting episode in European history. One of the nearest to Siegfried Sassoon's is a stirring volume, *Men in Battle*, by a Hungarian, Andreas Latzko. There is also the volume by Sir Philip Gibbs. Such books are a kind of journalism. They record passing events. We require of them that they may be so permanently excellent a record, that men will read them for a long period into the future and be so stirred that they will refrain from drifting again into the errors and horrors which the books so vividly depict.

We have still to learn whether Siegfried Sassoon, with his red anger, his queer understanding of men, his sensitiveness, his pride, his facility in spinning a song, the absurd ingenuousness of his rhythm, but the great force and interest of his present production, will be sufficiently inspired by other subjects

in the future to engage our sympathies in Peace as he has stirred our emotions in War.

“Ancestors,” “Morning Express,” and certain other poems contained in the volume entitled *The Old Huntsman* suggest the probability that he will.



We must create and fashion a new God—
A God of power, of beauty, and of strength;
Created painfully, cruelly,
Labouring from the revulsion of men's minds.
Cast down the idols of a thousand years,
Crush them to dust
Beneath the dancing rhythm of our feet.

But we are brave,
Full of a fiery courage,
And go onward
Onward,
Through the galloping trees.
We shout
Glowing phrases
—Snatches of ineffable wit.
The frenzy in our feet
Must surely set the world afire.

Ora mi sento un nuovo sole sovra il cuore,
un canto stranissimo nel profondo.

Per ciò è bello cantare
come fa il pazzo

Numbers one and two of the above quotations are torn from OSBERT SITWELL; number three is from a certain "Hymn to the New Poetry," published ten years ago, by Paolo Buzzi, an Italian Futurist. It is easy to sneer at all three, and those of a sneering disposition are only too glad to fix on snip-bits of the kind, which do no particular credit to their authors.

An impartial examination of Osbert Sitwell's poetry reveals it as the product of a mind charged with wholesome indignation against the hypocrisies and abuses of civilisation, but limited in its expression through an insufficiency of patience and discipline. His hatred of those responsible for or sympathetic with the European war is, one may believe, as strong as Sassoon's :—

From out this damning dreadful dark
 (While history, thundering, rolls by)
They wait for an anæmic lark
 To sing from weak blue sky.

Or if a dog is hurt, why then
 They see the evil, and they cry.
But yet they watch ten million men
 Go out to end in agony !

His poetry is hampered by an unfortunate tendency to sharpen his wits on the faults of others. Resisting the temptation to gibe, he shows himself equipped with a sense of appropriate irony :—

JUDAS AND THE PROFITEER

Judas descended to this lower Hell
To meet his only friend—the profiteer—
Who looking fat and rubicund and well,
Regarded him, and then said with a sneer,
“ Iscariot, they did you ! Fool ! to sell
For silver pence the body of God’s Son,
Whereas for maiming men with sword and shell
I gain at least a golden million.”

But Judas answered : “ You deserve your gold ;
It’s not His body but His soul you’ve sold ! ”

His free verse is rendered partially successful by the mental excitement that dictates its rhythm. His imagery is up-to-date. He takes the over-civilised man’s delight in artificial horrors, the result of strained nerves :—

Fear magnified my senses, and my brain
Could hear beyond the threshold of this world.

He also imagines primitive cosmic happenings, and traces the threads of race-memory. Though his mind works in a painted overheated atmosphere, it has a considerable

power of feeling its way back into the past or peering into the psychology of the present.



It is convenient and not inappropriate to consider the three members of the Sitwell family as branches of the same little tree in the garden of poetry. Certain literary persons have so detested the mere colour of their fruits as to get a sour taste in the mouth even at a distance. These, then, have stood apart sneering together.

The Sitwells have, however, introduced a novel imagery and a light-hearted spirit. Their claim to afford amusement is not in itself frivolous. But it is not backed by enough intellect: hence it has insufficient literary power.

SACHEVERELL SITWELL, leaning over Brighton pier, watches

Small waves roll gently forward
Raise their tired heads
And slowly break to foam—
As sudden as you turn
A page over in a book.

He imagines trees in Tahiti

Cut out like stage-trees carved in canvas;—

He writes :—

And now I fear
The moon will give
A show of sentiment,
And splash the land
With her maternal milk,

His impression of the nightingale is much at variance with traditional poetry, and, of course, most *un-Georgian* :—

• And in the tufted trees
Like wooden toys
The nightingales begin to creak
Their laboured song
Grinding out run by run each spray,
Till, wings relapsed,
They stare in vacancy
And listen to their neighbours.

Of the same Milton wrote :—

for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale,
She all night long her amorous descant sung ;
Silence was pleased.

But the long hard training of civilisation
has staled a Sitwell mind.

Our lives are short,
And do we differ but by our degrees of misery.

The parrot suits this mood better than the nightingale, but even that bird "gravely turns a somersault "

Much as the sun performs his antics
As he climbs the aerial bridge

and his tiresome chattering produces the following sardonic comment :—

The parrot's voice snaps out—
No good to contradict—
What he says he'll say again :
Dry facts, like biscuits,—



EDITH SITWELL lives, apparently, in a distorted wooden world, a wrangling disordered nightmare world, all striped, plumed, glassy, lustful; haunted by the ghosts of simian ancestors, paraded by freaks :—

Turn, turn again,
Ape's blood in each vein.
The people that pass
Seem castles of glass,
The old and the good
Giraffes of blue wood ;

There are wooden faces, wooden fruits, wooden leaves, wooden fields, wooden carrots; there is a wooden sun, a wooden sea; there are wooden ripples of smiles : this is only to

enumerate a few of the common objects that are now discovered by Miss Sitwell to be composed of that ubiquitous material. The trees themselves, however, are not necessarily wooden. In one place they are described as "iron trees," their leaves being qualified by the epithet "fat."

If Edith Sitwell's style is peculiar, that is because she finds the world and its people so incredibly amazing that she cannot use ordinary words to describe them. To meet these circumstances she has been obliged to invent a most peculiar diction and vocabulary. The process of invention being not yet complete, she often writes as a child still learning an immensely difficult lesson. The rhymed octosyllabics she so frequently uses are peculiarly illustrative of the process :—

The fusty showman fumbles, must
Fit in a particle of dust

The universe, for fear it gain
Its freedom from my box of brain.

Yet dust bears seeds that grow to grace
Behind my crude-striped wooden face

As I, a puppet tinsel-pink,
Leap on my springs, learn how to think,

She is very uncomfortable among people, particularly County People. Under the stress of torture she writes :—

I *saw* the County Families
Advance and sit and take their teas ;
I saw the County gaze askance
At my thin insignificance :
Small thoughts like frightened fishes glide
Beneath their eyes' pale glassy tide :
They said : " Poor thing ! we must be nice ! "
They said : " We know your father ! "—twice.

Her eyesight is not normal. She has the same faculty as many of our modern painters for seeing parts of things out of focus with the whole to which they belong, or are related. In a railway carriage she is puzzled by jolting human physiognomy :—

No longer with the horny eyes
Of other people's memories.
Through highly varnished yellow heat,
As through a lens that does not fit,
The faces jolt in cubes, and I
Perceive their odd solidity
And lack of meaning absolute :
For why should noses thus protrude,
And to what purpose can relate
Each hair so oddly separate ?

Edith Sitwell moves with comparative comfort among the shrill flowers of hell,

through a spangled and plumed atmosphere infested with parrots, parokeets, apes, mandolines, and deluded Pantaloons, amid the boom of falling wooden fruits under a paper sky. It suits her in fact better than that unsatisfactory too real world in which most people drag out their troubled existence. She is more advanced in her art than the poets of the 1890's in theirs. A substratum of earnest philosophy underlies, and has doubtless dictated, her extreme artificiality. She need not, of course, expect to be intelligible to the general public—even through an ear-trumpet.

Down the horn
Of her ear-trumpet I convey
The news that : “ It is Judgment Day ! ”
“ Speak louder ; I don’t catch, my dear.”
I roared : “ *It is the Trump we hear !* ”

SECTION V

For the end of the world was long ago—
And all we dwell to-day
As children of some second birth,
Like a strange people left on earth
After a judgment day.

If we don’t look too closely into the absolute meaning of this stanza by G. K.

CHESTERTON extracted from *The Ballad of the White Horse*, it may impress us with a grave awe. It might be taken to refer in many different ways to man's present sinister condition, to convey the idea of a Nietzschean "final man" lingering purposelessly on; or of a hopeless race, the refuse of a degraded and tired humanity chained in the fetters of its own civilisation; or to a tribe over-burdened with a self-consciousness out of which it cannot succeed in passing to that last condition in which man will be super-conscious.

But if we look closely into the stanza and its context, we find that Mr. Chesterton means only something natural and ingenuous. He belongs to that class of writers among which it is an instinct and a duty to glorify the events and the people of the past to the detriment of those of the present. He is also a neo-Christian, a Catholic of the new artificial cult that has recently established itself in England.

When Mr. Chesterton laughs heartily and with a full voice, as in his definitely comic poems, we join with him, for that laughter is Falstaffian, but when in a serio-comic mood he writes of the donkey as

The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things,

that is a very grave misconception of the asinine race, the more irritating when we realise the point to which he is leading. Says the donkey :—

Fools ! For I also had my hour ;
One far fierce hour and sweet :
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

Such sentimental condescension towards a little ass is typical of the journalist mind, that is, the mind that seeks the shortest and most obvious track towards a popular effect. Much of G. K. Chesterton's verse is spoilt by his anxiety to make some point. To read him, one might almost believe that he solemnly imagines the pride of England to have been established by its drunkards: his contempt for the man who does not fear God and love Beer is the underlying sentiment of a large number of his poems.

He has a flourishing gift of rhetoric. He writes :—

Words, for alas my trade is words, a barren burst of rhyme,
Rubbed by a hundred rhymesters, battered a thousand
times,

and, indeed, either he has not had the time, or, perhaps, the ability, or maybe, the desire to mould his thought to an individual diction, but has contented himself with the use of ready-made forms, borrowed chiefly from Swinburne and Kipling.

His serious verse, then, though of an efficient quality, is not likely to gain what is called "a permanent place in English poetry." Expert analysis could destroy it with, perhaps, one exception only, the immense *Ballad of the White Horse*, the most careful and least artificial of his poems.

His comic verses are mostly in the nature of gibes and lampoons, but they are so candid and witty that nobody with any sense of humour can fail to enjoy them, and they certainly come up to the standard of Hood, Calverley, Gilbert and other modern humorists.



HILAIRE BELLOC, well known, like G. K. Chesterton, as an untiring journalist (also as a war-expert, foot-traveller and Roman Catholic) has written some very pleasant verses, including ballads, poems of places,

drinking songs, satirical poems, epigrams, comic poems (particularly for children) and religious poems.

Heretics all, whoever you be,
In Tarbes or Nimes, or over the sea,
You never shall have good words from me.

Caritas non conturbat me.

But Catholic men that live upon wine
Are deep in the water, and frank, and fine;
Wherever I travel I find it so,

Benedicamus Domino.

He is quoted in many anthologies. "The South Country" and "To Night" are probably his best known pieces. He is a stylist, a witty and scholarly writer of the University type.

Balliol made me, Balliol fed me,
Whatever I had she gave me again;
And the best of Balliol loved and led me,
God be with you, Balliol men.

As a humorist he is unsurpassed among living poets. The "Lines to a Don" are excellent fun.

Remote and ineffectual Don
That dared attack my Chesterton,
With that poor weapon, half-impelled,
Unlearnt, unsteady, hardly held,
Unworthy for a tilt with men—
Your quavering and corroded pen;

Their full flavour cannot be tasted in extract ; and the poem entitled " To Dives " should also be read in its entirety, to be duly appreciated.

Hilaire Belloc makes a slighter but more deliberate contribution to modern poetry than G. K. Chesterton. " The Birds " is a pattern of the art of concentration :—

When Jesus Christ was four years old
The angels brought Him toys of gold,
Which no man ever had bought or sold.

And yet with these he would not play.
He made Him small fowl out of clay,
And blessed them till they flew away :

Tu creasti Domine.

Jesus Christ, Thou child so wise,
Bless mine hands and fill mine eyes,
And bring my soul to Paradise.

Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc are both journalists of the highest possible order. It is not to be thought that they invite us to take them very seriously as poets.



The same remark would not apply to J. C. SQUIRE, an excellent journalist too, and at one time a parodist and scribbler of humorous verse, but, according to every indication, a writer to whom poetry is a far more serious

matter than any of the other branches of his art.

A reviewer of one of his works recently referred to "the impressiveness of the position which Mr. Squire has come to hold as arbiter and foremost representative of modern English poetry." He is, in fact, the editor of one of the most ambitious literary periodicals that the century has produced, namely, *The London Mercury*, and his influence also extends to the literary columns of many dailies, weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies, so that it has often been hinted, rightly or wrongly, that such young poets as are blessed with his favour need not fear to be snubbed, drubbed or neglected by the Press.

In J. C. Squire we have an interesting example of the modern professional poet. Those who have watched his career will not have failed to note the stages by which he has climbed to his present summit. His activities have included politics as well as journalism : he was for some time a member of the Committee of the Fabian Society, and he has stood for Parliament.

His verses were first issued chiefly in a

number of small books, of which the editions were sometimes limited, and the repetition of certain poems from volume to volume was so tiresome that it was with considerable relief that his admirers welcomed in 1918 the publication of *Poems: First Series*, a book containing, as stated in the Preface, all that he did "not wish to destroy of four volumes of verse." The selection covers the years 1905-1917, and consists of fifty-one poems. A supplemental booklet, *The Birds*, covering the year 1918, contains a further eight. Recent years have shown an acceleration in his production of serious poetry, and an increase of confidence in his own powers.

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that in its infancy the "Georgian movement" was uncharacterised by evidence of design, that is, it did not, like other schools, preach or practise a special dogma of the poetic art. It was fortuitous and informal. But the poets subsequently included in the anthologies devoted much energy to narrowing and hardening what began as a spontaneous co-operative effort. They sought to establish (according to a recent review) "a

form of literary tyranny, demanding of its own disciples a complete conformity to certain standards, and seeking to exclude altogether those who refuse to do homage to those laws."

The serious poems of J. C. Squire are labours of conscious brain, supported by encyclopædic investigation. Their rhythmical arrangement is founded on the known forms of his predecessors and contemporaries, artificially re-adjusted to produce an appearance of novelty. His subjects are often chosen with self-conscious deliberation.

In his "Ode: In a Restaurant" he exclaims :—

So, so of every substance you see around
Might a tale be unwound

He inquires into the state of his own mind :

Beneath my skull-bone and my hair,
Covered like a poisonous well,
There is a land :

The poetical programme upon which he has resolved he condenses into a sonnet beginning :—

I shall make beauty out of many things :
Lights, colours, motions, sky and earth and sea,
The soft unbosoming of all the springs
Which that inscrutable hand allows to me,

But he is diffident concerning his real attitude :—

When I see truth, do I seek truth
Only that I may things denote,
And, rich by striving, deck my youth
As with a vain unusual coat ?

and again,

This firmness that I feel about my lips,
Is it but empty pride ?

“ I have not lacked my certainties,” he explains in extenuation of the statement that, on the other hand, he is “ vague ” and shrinks “ to guess God’s everlasting purposes.”

Comparing himself to a lake he exclaims :—

I make no sound, nor can I ; nor can I show
What depth I have, if any depth, below.

He examines his own “ processes of thought ” :

Sometimes I play with a thought and hammer and bend
it,
Till tired and displeased with that I toss it away,
again,

In bed I lie, and my thoughts come filing by.

His various Selves are intensely curious regarding each other, not to say suspicious. Brain often makes wrong conjectures, and

then is corrected by Spirit or Heart. In an argument between THE ONE AND THE OTHER, the ONE exclaims, "No; for I swear . . ."

I walked no rut with eyelids shut, my ears and eyes
were never blind,

Only my eager thoughts I bent on many things that
I desired

To make my greedy heart content ere flesh and blood I
left behind.

A short versicle describes how

I and myself swore enmity. Alack,
Myself had tied my hands behind my back.

Thus introspection pursues its course. Until 1917 he still seems to have wavered between the various methods which presented themselves as feasible for the ultimate representation of his personality in literature. Then finally he adopted the subject-poem scheme. "The Lily of Malud" was the first effort of the new period.

Resignation to objectivity immediately brought an improvement in style. The three subject-poems that have followed are entitled respectively "Rivers," "The Birds," and "The Moon." The first of these is an attempt in a very grand style and a duly effective liquid

rhythm to catalogue, poetically, the principal rivers of the world :—

All these I have known, and with slow eyes
I have walked on their shores and watched them,
And softened to their beauty and loved them
 Wherever my feet have been ;
And a hundred others also
Whose names long since grew into me,
That, dreaming in light or darkness,
 I have seen, though I have not seen.

The poet returns from Ebro, Guadiana, Congo, Nile, Colorado, Niger, Indus, Zambesi, Volga to his more native Chagford, Tavy Cleave, and Vixen Tor : his imaginary wanderings to the shores of the rivers of the world have only sickened him of foreign travel and convinced him of the superiority of his native country.

Again in " The Birds," we find him dealing with a large theme in a skilful manner. The encyclopædic instinct has gained such a hold on the poet's imagination that it can hardly soar, and, in fact, it comes to grief, landing him into such an ornithological blunder and imaginative misconception as to state that

A million years before Atlantis was
Our lark sprang from some hollow in the grass,

It is a function of the imagination to be scientifically precise. Imaginative statements that can be emphatically denied by science lay the whole art of the poet open to suspicion. The poem entitled "The Moon" does not bear any kind of analytic examination. It is rhetoric chiefly. The rhyme device of the fifth and sixth lines of each stanza is an original feature. Except for the difference in verse-form, stanza 9 reads almost like a rejected passage from "Laon and Cythna," and stanza 20 might well be a suppressed version of something by Keats.

The beauties of J. C. Squire's poetry are to be found where he is less artificial and least introspective as in the poems called "A Far Place," "Winter Nightfall," "Echoes," "The Ship," "The March," "A House," "Under," "A Generation," several of the "Songs," and that most deeply felt and sad record entitled "To a Bull-Dog." As an example of skilful craftsmanship the following "Song" (one of his most recent poems) may be quoted :—

You are my sky; beneath your circling kindness
My meadows all take in the light and grow;
Laugh with the joy you've given,
The joy you've given,
And open in a thousand buds, and blow.

But when you are sombre, sad, averse, forgetful,
Heavily veiled by clouds that brood with rain,
Dumbly I lie all shadowed,
I lie all shadowed,
And dumbly wait for you to shine again.



About the time of the publication of "The Lily of Malud," a new poet was launched on the market in the person of W. J. TURNER. It was rumoured in literary circles that here was a genius. Opening *The Hunter and Other Poems*, we find "Romance":

When I was but thirteen or so
I went into a golden land,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Took me by the hand.

We read to the last stanza:

The houses, people, traffic seemed
Thin fading dreams by day,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
They had stolen my soul away!

and we turn back gladly to Walter de la Mare's beautiful "Arabia," in which an emotion of this kind was recorded under a personal impulse and in the poet's own genuine rhythm.

Turner has suffered from the disadvantage of learning the "tricks of the trade" in the neo-Georgian school, and he has acquired the

habit of applying them with a certain craftiness to the particular subject in hand. We suspect that he has not read enough.

It would not be just to analyse his prentice work too searchingly. It is rich in beauty, and he has tried many and varied measures, even to the free verse of his "Ode to the Future." His progress has been rapid, and there are signs that he has many of the characteristics of a "real poet." Any one can see through his tricks; they are so artless that it is not possible to believe them inherent :—

Beyond the blue, the purple seas,
Beyond the thin horizon's line,
Beyond Antilla, Hebrides,
Jamaica, Cuba, Caribbees
There lies the land of Yucatan.

How Poe would have laughed at such verses !

The word "moon" and the word "trees," and simple monosyllabic epithets like cold, dim, dark, pale, wan, bright, grey, still, occur in all he has written to such excess that they cloy the reader's memory like some unwanted tune. His psychological observation is good, and when he is not representing mere moods, and is forgetting for the moment Keats,

Coleridge, de la Mare and all "tricks of the trade," he seems able to step aside from himself, and his idiom and measure become at such moments unaffected and delightful. We would instance particularly the poems entitled "Ecstasy," "The Sky-Sent Death," "In the Caves of Auvergne," "Epithalamium for a Modern Wedding," and "The Shepherd Goes to War," from which the opening four stanzas are here quoted :—

When Dawn drew near and tree or hill
Stood slowly bright, and clear, and still,
It lit the Shepherd, a dark rock
Amid his wide, grey, tumbling flock :
He stands as stand great ancient trees
When streams leap loud about their knees ;
And he moves slow and tranquilly
As clouds across a peaceful sky.
There is no voice for him to hear,
Save from men coming once a year
Beyond that haze-blue mountain bar,
Where the eastern cities are.
In still repose his features sleep,
He grows to look like his own sheep ;
And priestlike at each dawn he stands,
An ancient blessing on those lands.



EDWARD SHANKS began by writing pretty and refreshing lyrics in the style of the best

English folk-song but with an individual flavour; also in his earlier verse the influence of the German classics is apparent, particularly Goethe. The latter influence would appear to have reached him partly from the originals and partly by way of the earlier poems of Ford Madox Hueffer, a roundabout way, indeed. If a majority of the influences should be mentioned that guided the first exercises of this poet, *A Shropshire Lad* would certainly be among the foremost. But what he owes to A. E. Housman is sometimes indistinguishable from his debt to the tradition from which that poet also derived some of his inspiration. It was daring to transcribe the following stanza from a well-known traditional song in order to complete it with a new second stanza :—

The cuckoo is a fine bird,
She sings as she flies,
She brings us good tidings
And tells us no lies.
She sucks the sweet flowers
To make her voice clear
And the more she calls : Cuckoo !
The summer draws near.

The young writer is, however, obliged to

model himself on masters or masterpieces, and we are less likely to complain of his imitations if we discover in his personality sufficient strength to promise a future emergence into freedom.

Passing over his second book, which is mostly prentice work, we approach with apprehensive interest his third much larger volume, published in 1919, for which he was awarded the Hawthornden Prize of one hundred pounds. On this volume, in fact, we must base our estimate of his powers.

Its bulk is swelled chiefly by a poem in dramatic form entitled "The Queen of China," and by a narrative called "The Fireless Town." The lyrical poems which precede these two show a definite advance. We will quote, for instance, three stanzas from "A Night-Piece":—

Hark now ! So far, so far . . . that distant song . . .
Move not the rustling grasses with your feet.
The dusk is full of sounds, that all along
The muttering boughs repeat.

So far, so faint, we lift our heads in doubt.
Wind, or the blood that beats within our ears,
Has feigned a dubious and delusive note,
Such as dreamer hears.

Again . . . again ! The faint sounds rise and fail.
So far the enchanted tree, the song so low . . .
A drowsy thrush? A waking nightingale?
Silence. We do not know.

“Fête Galante” is an ingenious piece of work. But we are inevitably disappointed to find that, though the poet has so developed his powers, he still has not the perspicuity to suppress such poems as the sonnet beginning with the lines,

When in the mines of dark and silent thought
Sometimes I delve and find strange fancies there,

which are almost a parody of the opening lines of Shakespeare’s XXXth Sonnet.

Let us dwell for a moment on the title-poem, written in dramatic form, but clearly not intended for the stage. Directions regarding setting and atmosphere being entirely absent, we expect to find them conveyed in the body of the dialogue.

The characters, however, wobble from the start and before we have read far, we are forced to decide that the author has not fully realised them as individuals, nor been able to present their dramatic environment as more than a sketch. The Second Sentry in Act I

declares to the First Sentry, " You are wise and witty and pretty and smutty and full of good advice," and we desire of course to have this proved in the dialogue. But the First Sentry remains a flat and insipid person in spite of all the commendation of his friend. In the same way, the whole first act prepares us for the appearance of the Queen. At the beginning of the second act we are introduced to her speaking thus :—

For I have watched through ten full hours of light,
From the pale morning to this coloured time,
And every minute stuffed with sights and sounds,
Odours and shapes that stab the naked sense
With too much beauty and too keen a joy ;
And still the long hours float upon their way,
Large with contentment, rich with happiness,
And in conclusion bring the night with them.

She never comes to life, nor is there any dramatic life in the whole poem. But when the poet contents himself with pure narrative, as in " The Fireless Town," he produces a much better result. Here, for instance, is a short passage of considerable dramatic force,

Silence ! he cried again. His mockers still
Derided him, men loud and women shrill,
But the third time he used such vehemence,
Such thunder in his voice and so immense

A gesture of his spread and threatening hand
That all grew quieter, as the poplars stand
Whispering between the onslaughts of the storm,
And stared like fools upon his swaying form.

and here another of much beauty :—

A garden underneath her window lay
That in the cool and breathless end of day
Sent up sharp perfumes climbing to her sill
To take the shadowy air by waves and fill
Her room with ghosts of flowers.

and here another :—

Her thoughts were what the tree's are, when the wind
Strips the light petals off and leaves the fruit behind.

Much of Shanks' poetry is what reviewers might call "worthy of Keats." In this respect he resembles several other writers discussed in this section. Most of them, therefore, have still to prove that they are worthy of themselves.



Be it thine, O spirit,
The world of sense and thought to exalt with light;
Purge away blindness,
Terror and all unkindness.

Shine, shine
From within, on the confused grey world without
That, growing clearer,
Grows spiritual and dearer.

Thus JOHN FREEMAN addresses the spirit of Imagination, calling upon it "to give a body to beauty." His poetry is a continual discovery of new beauty in old and well-known objects. It is melodious, slow-flowing, mellifluous—not surprising. It is digressive and expansive, and those who learn to appreciate it do so gradually and by force of custom rather than through any sudden illumination.

He succeeded Edward Shanks as winner in 1920 of the Hawthornden Prize for his book, *Poems New and Old*, which is a collection, amounting to three hundred and eighty pages, of all his previous books, with a few poems added.

Nature, indeed, must count him among her devoted lovers. Scarcely a flower, tree or bird of hers does he leave unpraised. The serenity and gravity of his manner amount almost to what we would call stateliness, a quality rare in these days. Cleverness of that fashionable sort, upon which we have had occasion to comment in these pages, is alien to him. He cultivates his own plot in a workmanly manner, and the fruits duly mature.

Now, what is the quality of these fruits?

They are not suited to the popular taste; their grower will not ever be a widely known poet: probably he does not expect to be. But do his poems bring any message to a chosen few? Is the importance of their content commensurable with their gravity of tone?

In John Freeman's works the answer to these questions is not to be found. Several of his poems are themselves unanswered questions. He asks

What was it made the whole world marvellous?

and his own reply to his question is itself a question: The cloud—Children's faint noise—The trees—The snow—The light——? In a poem called "Earth to Earth" he asks "What is the soul?" And the conjectures that follow are all interrogative.

He has no definite message and no constructive ideal. His talent is chiefly descriptive. He has deep faith in Beauty, the deliverer, and that faith shines with a soft white glow through his poetry.

Beauty walked over the hills and made them bright.

An increased attention to condensation would render him more definitely interesting.

Often he appears to be discursive for the sheer joy of testing in how many different manners any given statement can be made. He is not an inventor of words but of passages. Thus in the following little poem the everlasting subject of the Moon is endowed with a slight new interest by reason of a certain novelty of treatment, though a more inventive poet might have accomplished an equivalent feat by the discovery of one single hitherto unused and entirely appropriate adjective :—

IT WAS THE LOVELY MOON

It was the lovely moon—she lifted
Slowly her white brow among
Bronze cloud-waves that ebbed and drifted
Faintly, faintlier afar.
Calm she looked, yet pale with wonder,
Sweet in unwonted thoughtfulness,
Watching the earth that dwindled under
Faintly, faintlier afar.
It was the lovely moon that lovelike
Hovered over the wandering, tired
Earth, her bosom gray and dovelike,
Hovering beautiful as a dove . . .
The lovely moon :—her soft light falling
Lightly on roof and poplar and pine—
Tree to tree whispering and calling,
Wonderful in the silvery shine
Of the round, lovely, thoughtful moon.



A war-poem in *The Times* in 1914 first brought the name of ROBERT NICHOLS before the public. At that moment the soldier-sonnets of Rupert Brooke were attracting wide-spread attention. General interest in the poets was much enlarged, and any verses of moderate quality expressing patriotic sentiments clearly and grammatically were granted large type in the Press. The opportunity was not missed by the alert: the sunken chest of many a disappointed poet-aster was rapturously re-inflated, and pens which had long been dry were dipped in red ink. Also new bards arose.

The Times poem was reprinted with others in 1915 in a little book called *Invocation*. This was suitably reviewed, and did not entirely fail to attract attention.

Now when I feel the hand of Death draw near
While yet no laurel stands upon my brow,

writes our young poet, successfully caricaturing John Keats. But there are at least two poems that mark the little book as somewhat superior to the average juvenile first attempt, namely, "Before Jerusalem" and "The Soldier."

In 1917 appeared *Ardours and Endurances : also A Faun's Holiday and Poems and Phantasies*, by Robert Nichols, with its two hundred and seven pages, its numerous sub-titles and sub-sections and sub-titles to sub-sections, its notes on the manner, occasion, place and date of composition of most of its contents, and finally its frontispiece-portrait, appropriately in uniform, and dated 1915. Here we have the young war-poet standing forth, as it were, in full panoply before his potential public.

The war sections of the book are inflated with this idea. They are effective in a self-conscious way. We are told too often what sort of a man the poet is, and how he feels. "I, too, take leave of all I ever had" . . . "As one who goes to solve a Mystery." . . . "They shall not say I went with heavy heart : " . . . "We have been happy. Happy now I go." . . . "I do not fear : I rejoice." . . . "I lift my head and smile." . . . "I turn, I pray Behind my hand, Shaken, unmanned," . . . "I cannot cheer or speak Lest my voice, my heart must break " . . . "Come now, O Death, while I am proud,"

. . . "Naked I wait my doom!" Some of the descriptions are excellent, and a certain progress is evident through the series. It is difficult to distinguish the genuine from the merely poetical, the soldier from the rhetorician, the real man from the aspiring poet.

Most young poets of serious aspiration attempt, or plan, some kind of *Endymion*. The images of Keats and Shelley present a marvellous glamour to the mind of youth. The "Endymion" of Robert Nichols is "A Faun's Holiday," which opens with the lines :—

Hark! a sound. Is it I sleep?
Wake I? or do my senses keep
Commune yet with thoughtful night . . .
(and so on).

He is teaching himself to write. The poem is interesting enough to make one want to turn back to the real "Endymion," and find how much better that is. "A Faun's Holiday" is a very stylish work, but it is unnecessary. It has fine-sounding passages, but they do not bear investigation. Its language has been too much used already; the type of image it employs is too well known. In its

passage entitled "Midday in Arcady" we discover the words "slumbrous" (twice), "drowsing" (three times) and all the other similar words that those lead us to expect; we find the expressions "deep peace"; "murmurous rumour of high noon"; "innumerable murmur." We are reminded of "Epipsychidion." We suddenly find the line :—

All love, all passion, all strife, all delight
and remember, of course, that Coleridge wrote :—

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,

The reader had been told by the Press that Robert Nichols was a brilliant young writer, a poet to be read. But the principal amusement to be derived from the greater part of the book is merely the pastime of puzzling how these verses have been put together, and trying constantly to recall from which particular passages of English poetry they happen to be derived. When Coleridge wrote an exercise he called it "In the Manner of Spenser"; when Keats set down verses in the style of his great forerunner he called

them "Imitation of Spenser." Also, who is to be bothered now with all these classical allusions? We have new Gods.

The recently published twenty-seven "Sonnets to Aurelia" narrate the story of an unfortunate love-affair, but more unfortunate than the worst woes of any disappointed lover was Robert Nichols' choice of the Shakespearean sonnet form for its registration:—

Excruciate me, then, if dealing pain

Can to your hapless heart bring any pleasure;
Make writhe my pride with frivolous disdain,

Mock my heart's fulness with your own's short measure,
Make vile my words, my honour's trust abuse

By what the most sordid count dull infamy,
To your heart's good all audience refuse,

Preferring evil to more torture me.

The "Four Idylls" in the same volume are, in their kind, conspicuously superior to the sonnets; and if we hold up to ridicule such an octave as that quoted above, we should, for purposes of contrast, also draw attention to the following lyrical poem:—

THE CONSUMMATION

There is a pigeon in the apple-tree,
And when he moves the petals fall in showers,
And O how low, how slow, how rapturously,
He croons and croons again among the flowers!

Above the boughs a solemn cloud-bank climbs,
White, pure white, dazzling, a shield of light;
Speck on its space, a lark, whose quick song chimes
With each brief pulse of wings, vaults t'ward the height.

Below, a beetle on a stalk of grass
Slowly unharnesses his shuttered wings,
His tiny rainbow wings of shrivelled glass.
He leaps! He whirrs away. The grass-blade swings.

Faint breezes through the branches wind and call.
It is the hour. This perfect hour is His,
Who, stooping through the depth, quiet, joy of all,
Prints on my upturned face a silent kiss.

Robert Nichols has made certain poems so promising that one may hope that he will outgrow his derivativeness and his megalomaniac poses. One of these better poems is "The Tower," a lyrical narrative of the betrayal of Jesus; another is "Danaë: Mystery in Eight Poems."

Perhaps the professional critics may yet prove right in having wagered their reputations on this precocious young man, who, when he can cease being "young," may become a better and wiser poet.



ROBERT GRAVES began writing poetry at Charterhouse, and, passing direct from school

to the trenches, there continued, and has thus been considered chiefly a "war-poet," though actually his verse is less a product of the war than we might suppose.

By the brookside one August day,
Using the sun for clock,
Tom whiled the languid hours away
Beside his scattering flock.

Carving with a sharp-pointed stone
On a broad slab of slate
The famous lives of Jumping Joan,
Dan Fox and Greedy Kate.

Rhyming of wolves and bears and birds,
Spain, Scotland, Babylon,
That sister Kate might learn the words
To tell to toddling John.

These verses from his "Ballad of Nursery Rhyme" somewhat describe the poet's own art. His development through three successive books from the Nursery to the School-room and then out into the Fields has been interesting both psychologically and spiritually. He barks at the critics in truly dogmatic style :—

The holiest, cruellest pains I feel
Die stillborn, because old men squeal
For something new : "write something new :
"We've read this poem—that one too,"

and again :—

Critic, son of Conscious Brain,
Spying on our privacy.
Slam the window, bolt the door,
Yet he'll enter in and stay ;
In to-morrow's book he'll score
Indiscretions of to-day.

He reverts more than twice to this subject, but we are not much daunted, not proposing to examine him too closely.

The kindly, and ballad-like, and sometimes jocular intention that informs most of his verse is more suited to comment than to criticism. One cannot say of him, at present, that his poetry is either good or bad. As in the case of several other young poets of this war-moment, too much importance has been attached to a pleasant and congenial instinct for making Rhymes. His progress, so far, warrants some belief that an instinctive gift for balladry may develop into a real power of creation, but, at the same time, he has shown insufficient profundity to justify a definite faith in his future. His art, as it may be at present understood, is one rather of intelligent adaptation than of personal invention.



GERALD GOULD first published some lyrics in 1906. They were at once taken up by the public. His second book appeared about the same time as Rupert Brooke's first poems. The contrast was interesting; the differences of thought, of expression and of ideal; on the one hand acceptance and faith, on the other rejection and scepticism: the two characters were as distant as the poles.

The verse of Gerald Gould is of a lyrical character, and is for the greater part subjective. He began and has continued a love-poet, consecrated to the lady of his dreams, her "flushing cheek," her "red lips" and the "sweetness of her mouth," the "beauty" or "blueness of her eyes." The following early lyric is a good specimen of his skill:—

You walk in a strange way,
Your motions sing;
Your eyes have a thing to say,
A secret thing.

Your speech is soft as the sighs
Of the blown South;
Your face is a flower to mine eyes,
A flame to my mouth.

His language is often metaphorical : “ the halls of night ” ; “ the dragging wheels of doom ” ; “ a cloud on love’s clear glass.” His love-call is passionate and definite. He does not grope with vague sensual hands in the dark. It is the male wooing the “ laughing kisses, soft and light,” of his beloved, his “ lady ” who is “ warm and tender, to be embraced.”

Herrick, Shelley and Swinburne have influenced him. His style is not free from the type of conventional word or phrase that has now lost its vigour through abuse : “ remembrance sore ” ; “ barren dreams ” ; “ clear utterance ” ; “ long pain ” ; “ omnipotent ” ; “ innumerable ”—and “ drink your beauty as a man drinks wine.” Many of his later poems are more subtle than the early lyrics of simple love. The difficulties of the faithful lover and of marriage are introduced, and in the book entitled *Monogamy* a narrative form is adopted. Gentleness, benevolence toward fellow-humanity are strong characteristics of his poetry. In his latest book, he imagines the German mother addressing the English mother :—

Your son and mine in love were bred,
Your son and mine in hate are dead,
Yet never hated, never knew
The sense of what they had to do,
But perished, brother slain by brother,
Who might as well have loved each other.



How have I used my eyes and ears?
Oh have I really seen the spring?
Men live and die, and barely slip
Out of the world, remembering
What earth was like ; preoccupied
With furniture, each one allied
By some frayed cobweb-chain of thought
To something in infinity,
Men live and die.

FREDEGOND SHOVE is the writer of these lines. She is the possessor of an uncanny sense of the reality beneath fact. Her subliminal is her actual existence. She has a clear memory of other states than the present. She has "really seen the spring," for she has seen it in those other states of existence, and memory carries her back to them. She remembers, too, a wintry existence when, before birth, she was

more infinite
Than living man, having no shape or sight,

It was then she “ lay still within the crater earth,” and, she relates,

The cries of lambs in meadows winter-worn,
The sameness of those meadows, faintly green,
With a stiff hedge of naked thorn between,
Were then to me a knowledge, not a dream
As in my present, waking life they seem.

The subjects of deity and immortality are treated with uncertainty. God is thus addressed :—

Thou shapest autumn, spring and death and me :
Thou knowest not Thy purpose, nor dost care :
And we make songs to please and ravish Thee,—
And sometimes, in the sunshine, Thou dost hear.

And she exclaims :—

I want no angel in a fiery hood
To show my soul the way,
Nor any creed to tell me to be good ;
I need not pray :

and

Long, long, immortal lives in one short span
My soul has spent,

In a beautiful poem called “ The New Ghost ” the Lord leads away a spirit that has cast the garment of flesh “ to a far-distant land ” ; nevertheless she herself holds that if she has a soul, “ sooner or later ” the dark must swallow it.

Her poems amount at present only to a few dozen. They are of deep significance and unusual beauty.



When *The Two Blind Countries* appeared in 1914 some thought it a most lovely and original book, but some were angry because it seemed to them like a pot-pourri of the styles of Walter de la Mare, Rupert Brooke, Frances Cornford, and certain others. Its author, ROSE MACAULAY, was already a writer of experience, having published six or more novels. Whatever influences may have affected her, her verse is sure enough of its own purpose, and delightful enough to please the sourest critic. This is what the title of the book means :—

On either side of a grey barrier
The two blind countries lie ;
But he knew not which held him prisoner,
Nor yet know I.

She is certainly of the school of Walter de la Mare. For the rest, several of her poems have a strong flavour of Cambridge, and thus incidentally of Rupert Brooke and Frances Cornford. But Mrs. Cornford wrote in early

youth and then appears to have stopped, while Rose Macaulay brought the skill and depth of maturity to the making of her verses. She is somewhat of the *clever* type, but has more intellect and modesty than others of that class. *The Two Blind Countries* contains at least a dozen things that most readers of modern poetry may enjoy, and, of these, particularly "The Alien," "Trinity Sunday" and "The Thief," should be mentioned.

Her second volume, "Three Days," published in 1919, is more free from influence. It seems to represent a transition stage.



JOHN DRINKWATER'S first influences were Swinburne, William Morris, Rossetti and several other Victorians. The poems contained in an early volume (1908) are derivative and commonplace enough to provoke mirth: they are also conceived and written in that speciously noble manner still practised about that date. One need only glance over a few pages to find the whole, ugly, and insincere vocabulary of poetic diction: in-

scrutable; supernal; meseems; swoon; fashions; omnipotent; travail, or such lines as "Magnificent in conquest of the world."

It would be unjust to draw attention to immature verses, now mostly suppressed, were it not that Drinkwater has never freed himself from his early faults, and in his own selection, published in 1917, which contained all he was "anxious to preserve" of poems written between 1908 and 1914, we find him still (in spite of an improvement due to practice) confidently employing an obsolete and *cliché-ridden* language, full of unnatural, or borrowed phrases, a very adept in the "extravagant and absurd diction" denounced by Wordsworth over a century ago.

"The Fires of God" (1912) incorporates the influence of Francis Thompson, which is revealed not only in style (*e. g.* "I turned me from that place in humble wise"), but also in conception and form; "The Hound of Heaven" being followed even to the extent of introducing an intermittent refrain of six lines similar in structure and rhythm to that of Thompson's poem. We find that specious nobility of manner studiously maintained, as

witness the three concluding lines of the poem :—

Across the skies in ceremonial state,
To greet the men who lived triumphant days,
And stormed the secret beauty of the world.

Not until after 1912 did the influence of A. E. Housman take definite precedence. We then find it pervading the whole atmosphere of Drinkwater's verse. His local colour is drawn from the Cotswolds, instead of Shropshire. In the last volume, *Loyalties*, other influences have begun to supplant it.

John Drinkwater's admirers are attracted doubtlessly by the simple and benevolent mind revealed in his verse. The following lines may fittingly be quoted from a poem entitled " Politics " :—

You say a thousand things,
Persuasively,
And with strange passion hotly I agree,
And praise your zest,
And then
A blackbird sings
On April lilac, or fieldfaring men,
Ghostlike, with loaded wain,
Come down the twilit lane
To rest,
And what is all your argument to me?

That he has an unaffected confidence in his own powers is plainly shown in the following passage :—

I think of Time. How, when his wing
Composes all our quarrelling
In some green corner where May leaves
Are loud with blackbirds on all eves,
And all the dust that was our bones
Is underneath memorial stones,
Then shall old jealousies, while we
Lie side by side most quietly,
Be but oblivion's fools, and still
When curious pilgrims ask—"What skill
Had these that from oblivion saves?"—
My song shall sing above our graves.

Something of his homely philosophy is reflected in the last stanza of a poem entitled "For a Guest Room."

For he is blest
Who, fixed to shun
All evil, when
The worst is known,
Counts, east and west,
When life is done,
His debts to men
In love alone.

Meanwhile, John Drinkwater has written in prose and in lyrical and dramatic form several interesting studies of Great Men. His activities on behalf of the Repertory Theatre

in England have been keen and strenuous. His play *Abraham Lincoln* is a work of great interest. It may be hoped that his literary development will continue along the lines and in the style of this powerful drama.



Of ALFRED NOYES nothing can be written in extenuation. No other poet of our time (not even the late Mrs. Wilcox, nor John Oxenham) has won so spurious a reputation, or poured out ink in such wanton disregard of the elements of true poetry.

His present printed works cover more than a thousand pages of close type, and he is not yet middle-aged. There is hardly a theme that he cannot handle with the same apparent facility, in the same careless meretricious style. He is a master of the commonplace. It is plain that it has not occurred to him to treasure his thought in order that it may mature into significant beauty. Accurate observation, close inquiry, a respect for detail; selection, condensation, rejection of the unnecessary; choice of image, phrase or rhythm; æsthetic honesty, literary candour, local truth, psychological accuracy; prudent

management of rhyme, economy of epithet, love of the true substantive, pleasure in the right verb; imaginative curiosity, the joy of new philosophic discovery, the adventure of metaphysical speculation, the humility or courageous ardour of religious doubt, and finally toleration for these qualities or attributes when exemplified in his contemporaries—these apparently, one and all, are unknown to him.

His "epic" *Drake* is a pageant of all the faults of careless superficiality. The blank verse is without distinction. The images are ready-made. It is packed with the mannerisms of a counterfeit epic style. The fact should be noted that four of the twelve books begin with the word "Now," two others with "Meanwhile," and one is dignified with the opening line: "Dawn, everlasting and almighty Dawn." Effects are attempted by the mere piling up of colours. In thirteen consecutive lines no less than seven epithets of colour are used: gold, golden, purple, brown, silver, brown, green.

His declamatory lyrical pieces are written in the easiest metres to hand; they gallop

along, according to their kind, in facile rhymed quatrains, lightly constructed stanzas, or lolloping pentameters, hexameters, or heptamers hybrids, with frequent *italic* refrains. A few of them, such as the well-known "Highwayman," make exciting recitations and are much used by popular elocutionists. In America, and also by a certain type of English mind, he has been considered one of the leading British poets of the time. He has been universally praised by reviewers.

SECTION VI

GROUPING poets together under sections is not particularly satisfactory either to a writer or to readers, and to the poets themselves it may appear rather impertinent. But, as such a method admirably suits the character of this book, it has been impossible to reject it. The Irish poets who are considered in this section are classified together, less because they are Irish, than because they represent in common a certain type of mentality. Thus they are all religious; they are temperamentally nationalistic; each has the type of mind

that dwells constantly and lovingly on folklore, rural tradition, and the native beauties of the soil.

I saw God. Do you doubt it?
Do you dare to doubt it?
I saw the Almighty Man. His hand
Was resting on a mountain, and
He looked upon the World and all about it :
I saw him plainer than you see me now,
You mustn't doubt it.

That is, according to JAMES STEPHENS, " What Tomas an Buile said in a Pub," and God, though he was dissatisfied with the world, yet would not strike it because Tomas an Buile was " in the way."

In another poem God is described desolately lingering in his solitude after Adam and Eve have been exiled from Eden. In another, God, withdrawn " Sad to His Heaven of Ivory and Gold," is taunted from the Earth by Satan on account of a miserable weeping woman whom he has left unaided. In another, the poet has a vision of the Last Judgment " When He was left without a friend," faced by the millions who had

Dodged here and there in corners of the earth
Cursing the sun,

and God finds that he cannot face them :—

The Judge stood frightened, turned, and stole away.

Those are early poems, and of later years James Stephens has been less preoccupied with dissatisfactions, or perhaps with their expression in verse. His earlier poetry, though less fluent, is more satisfactory. His mood of intolerant enquiry is more disciplined than the state of mind in which now he permits himself to spin off such verses as :—

But around us everywhere
Grass and tree and mountain were
Thundering in mighty glee
“ We are the voice of Deity.”

In the volume entitled “ The Hill of Vision ” he could affirm

Everything that I perceive,
Sun and sea and mountain high,
All are moulded by my eye :

Now, in the later *Songs from the Clay*, he laments

I am deaf and dumb and blind,
No reply can I invent
When a stream, a tree, a wind
Asks am I intelligent.

But in spite of a certain careless fluency, he still has given us in later years many charming

minor lyrics descriptive of Ireland and Irish characters, or in the nature of nursery rhymes. He is a poet whose technique should not be too severely scrutinised.



PADRAIC COLUM, on the other hand, is such an infrequent and careful writer that he is represented, in poetry, only by one volume, *Wild Earth*.

Give me to the Earth.
With the seed would I enter.
O ! the growth thro' the silence
From strength to new strength ;
Then the strong bursting forth
Against primal forces,

There are translations from the Irish, and the atmosphere of Ireland haunts the original poems. These are the verses of a devout man with a great love of the earth. He has also a fine sense of traditional ballad. Any one who knows Ireland at all will appreciate the following :—

INTERIOR

The little moths are creeping
Across the cottage pane ;
On the floor the chickens gather,
And they make talk and complain.

And she sits by the fire
Who has reared so many men ;
Her voice is low like the chickens'
With the things she says again.

“ The sons that come back do be restless,
They search for the thing to say ;
Then they take thought like the swallows,
And the morrow brings them away.

“ In the old, old days, upon Innish,
The fields were lucky and bright,
And if you lay down you'd be covered
By the grass of one soft night.”

She speaks and the chickens gather,
And they make talk and complain,
While the little moths are creeping
Across the cottage pane.



JOSEPH CAMPBELL and Padraic Colum, when in London, both joined in the discussions concerning the art of poetry, referred to in Section II of this book. Campbell has a fine penetrative imagination and a most natural style. His poems are religious or are about the earth and man. His descriptions of Irish folk are remarkable for their clear detail and plain truthfulness. The following is an instance of masterful artistic condensation :—

THE OLD WOMAN

As a white candle
In a holy place,
So is the beauty
Of an aged face.

As the spent radiance
Of the winter sun,
So is a woman
With her travail done.

Her brood gone from her
And her thoughts as still
As the waters
Under a ruined mill.



A poet who is not still a youngster and yet can only show the public a bare thirty pages, after many years, as his complete production in verse, might not seem worthy of serious attention, if it were not for the fine imaginative and epigrammatic qualities of that small output. SHANE LESLIE'S chief virtue is that very restraint that gives him an advantage over many living poets. His religious poems have such a primitive freshness as seldom animates the religious poetry of civilisation. An art so slim is better quoted than discussed :—

BOG LOVE

Wee Shemus was a misdropt man
Without a shoulder to his back;
He had the way to lift a rann
And throttled rabbits in a sack.

And red-haired Mary, whom he wed,
Brought him but thirty shillings told;
She had but one eye in her head,
But Shemus counted it for gold.

The two went singing in the hay
Or kissing underneath the sloes,
And where they chanced to pass the day
There was no need to scare the crows.

But now with Mary waked and laid
As decent as she lived and died,
Poor Shemus went to buy a spade
To dig himself a place beside.

FLEET STREET

I never see the newsboys run
Amid the whirling street,
With swift untiring feet,
To cry the latest venture done,
But I expect one day to hear
Them cry the crack of doom
And risings from the tomb,
With great Archangel Michael near;
And see them running from the Fleet
As messengers of God,
With Heaven's tidings shod
About their brave unwearied feet.

SECTION VII

THE figure of D. H. LAWRENCE presents a picture of the power of intellect grappling with the idea of sense. His poetry is competent, but wearisome. Has he then loved so much and so often? Has woman no beauty but that which can be perceived through the horn-rimmed spectacles of sex?

Patience, little Heart.
One day a heavy, June-hot woman
Will enter and shut the door to stay.

But meanwhile :—

My mouth on her pulsing
Neck was found,
And my breast to her beating
Breast was bound.

and—

How caressingly she lays her hand on my knee,
How strangely she tries to disown it, as it sinks
In my flesh and bone and forages into me,
How it stirs like a subtle stoat, whatever she thinks!

Swinburne's sensuality was subject to his art. Lawrence has but little power to transmute his feelings, and writes almost entirely in the first person singular. He has neither

the eloquence of the courtier, nor the open exuberance of the healthy lover.

He has descriptive powers, of course, but his verse never settles down to any subject. Things outside himself are only beautiful as symbols of his own sexual emotions. Natural beauty is relentlessly dragged down into the hot chamber of the human senses. His rhythms waver, stutter, and often evaporate, for his intellect cannot control them. Yet :—

Bitter, to fold the issue, and make no sally ;

To have the mystery, but not go forth ;

To bear, but retaliate nothing, given to save

The spark in storms of corrosion, as seeds from the
north.

“ Cruelty and Love ” is one of his most objective poems. Here he has cast the *ego* into a scene of dramatic significance. There is a curious relation between this poem and Charlotte Mew’s “ Farmer’s Bride.” The latter gains by the comparison. These are the concluding lines of “ Cruelty and Love.”

I only know I let him finger there

My pulse of life, letting him nose like a stoat

Who sniffs with joy before he drinks the blood :

And down his mouth comes to my mouth, and down

His dark bright eyes descend like a fiery hood
Upon my mind : his mouth meets mine, and a flood
Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown
Within him, die, and find death good.

In his youth apparently D. H. Lawrence was a schoolmaster. It was full of weariness to him :—

For myself a heap of ashes of weariness, till sleep
Shall have raked the embers clear : I will keep
Some of my strength for myself, for if I should sell
It all for them, I should hate them—

—I will sit and wait for the bell.

He wrote a series of country poems, and it is noticeable that in a dialect medium his intense egoism disappears almost entirely.

In a recent poem he asks :—

Have I profaned some female mystery, orgies
Black and phantasmal?

Egoism is diminishing too in his later poems, but its absence leaves them deprived of much of their force :

Perhaps 'twas a dream of warning,
For I've lost my peace.

When his senses are not roused he records events that are often not worth the record. The intellectually " Chosen " of this earth

adore their Lawrence. Fundamentally they are right. He has himself a brilliant intellect. Their adoration is based on root fact : these comments refer to the taste of the fruit.



More than love, and more than other pleasure
I desire thrilling combat of the wit.
As far as I can measure
This man is rare, and therefore fit
To be a combatant, let me say one thing new
That I may gage him so, to prove my judgment true.

ANNA WICKHAM is a brilliant writer of psychological gossip—but she is more.

What was not done on earth by incapacity
Of old, was promised for the life to be.
But I will build a heaven which shall prove
A lovelier paradise
To your brave mortal eyes
Than the eternal tranquil promise of the Good.

Most of her poems are short ; some are mere epigrams. Her measures ramble in disjointed arbitrary fashion : she has, in fact, more reason than rhyme. She upholds, before everything, the right of woman to possess her own individuality in peace. Her style is chiefly conversational :—

He who has lost soul's liberty
Concerns himself for ever with his property,
As, when the folk have lost the dance and song,
Women clean useless pots the whole day long.

But when the moment of pure lyric is upon her, lines take a sweet and ordered march and beautiful rhythm, such as that of the four stanzas of "The Cherry-Blossomed Wand," of which here is the first :—

I will pluck from my tree a cherry-blossom wand,
And carry it in my merciless hand,
So I will drive you, so bewitch your eyes
With a beautiful thing that can never grow wise.

She has a rare power of condensing a troublesome problem of social psychology into the form of a lyric :—

THE TIRED MAN

I am a quiet gentleman,
And I would sit and dream ;
But my wife is on the hillside,
Wild as a hill-stream.

I am a quiet gentleman,
And I would sit and think ;
But my wife is walking the whirlwind
Through night as black as ink.

O, give me a woman of my race
As well controlled as I,
And let us sit by the fire,
Patient till we die !

The other side of the same problem is presented in a longer poem entitled "Nervous Prostration." It begins :—

I married a man of the Croydon class
When I was twenty-two.
And I vex him, and he bores me
Till we don't know what to do !
It isn't good form in the Croydon class
To say you love your wife,
So I spend my days with the tradesmen's books
And pray for the end of life.

There is great variety in the moods of her poems. Sometimes she rebels as hotly against the slavery of verse-making, as, at others, against the drudgery of domestic existence. Some of her verses are in wild moods of anger or lust. There is plenty here to shock those mild beings who delight in the thrill of a good shock. It is interesting to compare her love-poems with those of D. H. Lawrence. The querulous chaotic despair, or tired aimlessness of the man who seeks warm pleasure among women, but whose intellect interferes with the freedom of the senses ; but in Anna Wickham, frank sensuality : joy and freedom in the delights of the senses—no sharp differentiation between lust and love.

Kiss me not to-night,
Kiss me not for a year.
Let us live lonely days,
Keeping a holy fast,
Walking rough hilly ways,
So that we meet at last,
Near fir-trees on a height,
In still, kind, perfect night.

Men, particularly, should read her poems. It has been remarked that the poetry of women lacks strength and impartiality. Here is a woman whose intellect controls her senses, and whose love-poems are as natural as daylight or snow.

SONG

I was so chill, and overworn, and sad,
To be a lady was the only joy I had.
I walked the street as silent as a mouse,
Buying fine clothes, and fittings for the house.

But since I saw my love
I wear a simple dress,
And happily I move
Forgetting weariness.



JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY, the present editor of *The Athenæum*, who has converted that ancient weekly into a periodical that is

the delight of modern literary circles, though a painstaking critic, has often shown himself, individually, in his own articles on new poets, an undisciplined judge: on the one hand, the dupe of temporary enthusiasms, or, on the other, a bond-servant to intellectual prejudice. His lyrical poems are not remarkable. To the literature, however, of poetic drama he has lately added a play which certain good judges specify as among the most excellent works of its kind produced this century.

Cinnamon and Angelica is a delicate comedy with a tragical ending. It is not an acting-play, though it could be acted. One of its virtues is that its blank verse is not pseudo-Shakespearean. It has a moral, but it does not point one. Its gossamery atmosphere is shot with rays of logical thought: the kingdom of Cinnamon is a reflex of the real world, yet a world apart. Its characters philosophise through a veil of imagery.

All, all are children who do idly tear
At the roots of the great green o'erbranching tree
Whose sun-warm fruit shining above our head
Has lured us into climbing her large limbs,

Whereunto clinging we do eat our fill
Of mortal knowledge, laughing on those below ;
Yet sudden looking up through the myriad threads
Of woven light spun by the glancing leaves,
We have a perilous vision what we are,
How small, how brief, like summer flies that stir
The surface of a water on a day.
For in that moment comes an anguished sight
Of lands beyond our dreaming.

And some do stand apart thinking upon them
With quiet eyes, and some do softly whisper
Of what they saw, and some speak not again :
And many have not seen ; but all forget,
For all are children. Some would build a house
Among the columned roots, and some would know
What they are made of and from whence they came,
And some would have one for their very own
To carry it away. So do we tear
At the roots of our o'erarching happiness
Until it falls upon us at our play.



Extracts from the poems of HELEN PARRY EDEN should be quoted as specimens of a certain kind of whimsical verse that is fortunately cultivated to-day by writers who seem endowed with intellectual powers of an uncommon order, but also with a predominant sense of humour. The only begetter of very many of Mrs. Eden's poems is a little daughter called Betsey-Jane.

TO BETSEY-JANE, ON HER DESIRING TO
GO INCONTINENTLY TO HEAVEN

My Betsey-Jane it would not do,
For what would Heaven make of you,
A little honey-loving bear,
Among the Blesséd Babies there?

Nor do you dwell with us in vain
Who tumble and get up again
And try, with bruised knees, to smile—
Sweet, you are blessed all the while.

And we in you : so wait, they'll come
To take your hand and fetch you home,
In Heavenly leaves to play at tents
With all the Holy Innocents.

“ Four-Paws ” is a cat, beloved of Betsey-Jane. “ Four-Paws ” emigrates from the country to Battersea with the family. London is very disappointing. There is a most charming conciliatory poem to “ Four-Paws,” of which the following are the concluding stanzas :—

And now you're here. Well, it may be
The sun *does* rise in Battersea
Although to-day be dark,
Life is not shorn of loves and hates
While there are sparrows on the slates
And keepers in the Park :

And you yourself will come to learn
The ways of London and in turn
Assume your cockney cares,
Like other folk who live in flats,
Chasing your purely abstract rats
Upon the concrete stairs.

Some of the poems are religious; most of them are of a domestic order. Many are humorous; none trivial. A foreigner might obtain from them a vivid and truthful impression of English domestic life. Behind the humour is a fundamental understanding of humanity. The satire is sharp and deliciously appropriate.



FRANCES CORNFORD belongs to the same category as Helen Parry Eden. Her production is extremely slight in bulk, but charming in character. We owe gratitude to such poets for their liveliness. They provide us with a weapon of argument against sour people who complain of the austerity of poetry. Her triolet "To a Fat Lady seen from the Train" is well known. The follow-

ing is a good specimen from among her couple of dozen lyrics :—

AUTUMN MORNING AT CAMBRIDGE

I ran out in the morning, when the air was clean and new,
And all the grass was glittering, and grey with autumn
dew,

I ran out to the apple tree and pulled an apple down,
And all the bells were ringing in the old grey town.

Down in the town, off the bridges and the grass
They are sweeping up the leaves to let the people pass,
Sweeping up the old leaves, golden-reds and browns,
While the men go to lecture with the wind in their gowns.

PART IV
SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

THERE is still current among certain people a conception of the Poet as primarily a *teacher*. In the foregoing pages it has been assumed that the function of poetry is rather to delight, and an attempt has been made to emphasise the characteristic light-heartedness of modern verse. The poet must be an expert in the right use of words and in placing them in their most appropriate rhythmical sequence. Then he is namer, comparer, emphasiser, and, occasionally, glorifier. His observation must be accurate and penetrative. Imagination will not serve without a knowledge of fact to support it. His *soul* will be his personality ; inspiration will depend on his competence to absorb the influences toward which that personality is sympathetic : composition will be subject to his command of language and his technical power to use words in their most appropriate rhythmical sequence.

These remarks, of course, do not penetrate to the heart of the matter ; they concern the

technique of the art. So very much has already been written throughout the ages upon the mystical character and spiritual functions of the poet that it has become almost unnecessary to add to that particular kind of literature.

To-day the mastery of language is rendered increasingly difficult by the advance of superficial education and the rise of journalism and advertisement. The misuse of words is, generally speaking, more popular than their correct use; both ear and intellect readily acquire bad habits, and, to avoid contamination, it is almost necessary to adopt the difficult course of retiring permanently to remote districts of the country where a certain regard for the correct use of words is still observed by natives; and reading nothing but the best literature.

The wiser among contemporary poets have shown of recent years a sense of public responsibility in refraining from printing any verse but such as they honestly believe to be the absolute best that they are able to compose. There is a multiplicity of younger poets, but in only few cases a mass of individual

production. There seems to be an appreciable tendency among them to respect their medium, and the more serious recognise the inherent difficulties of their art. In cases where reticence cannot be ascribed to these causes, it is probably due to bewilderment. Never in the history of civilisation has the imagination been encompassed by so many impenetrable facts. The weaker intelligences succumb generally to casting inward for their impressions. Strenuous introspection follows, and the poems thrown out with effort from the recesses of the self-examining mind have the character of bubbles, and burst as quickly.

When David Copperfield writes "I was alone in the world, and much given to record that circumstance in fragments of English versification," he is describing the conditions of a majority of poetasters, including, of course, the young Dickens himself. Dickens, however, knew the value and soon showed the fruits of patient application to his art. Verse is undoubtedly inferior to prose as a medium, but it is easier to write. Very few poems bear comparison with the best prose paragraphs of such writers as Fielding, Charlotte

Brontë, Dickens, Darwin or Hardy. 'The mere act of versification is often responsible for insincerities, unconscious or conscious. The Yankee who wrote his book ("Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum") in the following style had certainly overcome the elementary difficulties of his particular medium :

To just one girl I've tuned my sad bazoo,
Stringing my pipe-dream off as it occurred,
And as I've tipped the straight talk every word,
If you don't like it you know what to do.

His pronouncement on the value of his chosen form is natural and sincere :

A sonnet is a very easy mark,
A James P. Dandy as a carry-all
For brain-fag wrecks who want to keep it dark
Just why their crops of thinks is running small.



For disciplinary reasons I have been obliged to adopt, in the composition of this book, a formal and impersonal attitude towards my contemporaries. Had I written about them in the first person I should have felt uncomfortable; I might have become chatty and diffuse, and there would have been a serious

amount of personal responsibility. It is in the nature of an impertinence to try and probe the mind of a living man publicly and in print. Poets claim generally that their works are the absolute expression of themselves. If this indeed were so, blunt adverse criticism would be equivalent to picking a quarrel, or to the making of an enemy. It would not be like saying : I disagree with you. It would be saying : I dislike you. Therefore it cannot be emphasised too strongly how very rare are sincerity and naturalness in poetic composition and how few poets succeed in presenting a true version of their personalities.

I have examined a very large proportion of the books published during the last decade. Yet is it not exasperating to realise that in all that search I have possibly overlooked, either by chance or through some incapacity in myself, that very poet whom the future will recognise as the true genius of our time? Publicly, the rule still holds good that the best poetry is more slowly acknowledged than the merely startling or ephemeral. Perhaps, high up on some shelf, neglected by the reviewers and by myself (a patient searcher),

stands that ominous volume, a "Paradise Lost," or "Songs of Innocence," or "Prometheus Unbound" of this age, accumulating dust.

If opinions vary concerning dead poets, how much more do they, naturally, about living. Yet, though it is known to be almost impossible to apply any conclusive test to our contemporaries, even here a certain general classification is justifiable. I can easily decide, for instance, that about seventy-five per cent. of the volumes that I read are *bad*, indisputably third class, whereas certainly not more than one per cent. is first class.

As for the professional critics, is it, I wonder, a revelation to anybody that in the majority of editorial offices preference is given to books whose publishers are advertisers in the paper, that favour is shown to friends and partisans of the paper, colleagues in the trade and great reputations that must not be impugned, that insipid critics are preferred provided that they have two or three hundred *cliché* phrases at their command, or tired critics, sometimes too hungry to object to writing what they are told? Their sentences are quoted as

“Opinions of the Press.” Reputations are made like those of William Watson or Alfred Noyes. Every time such an author publishes a book, a trained person has merely to jot down a series of the conventional phrases: “sustained inspiration,” “finished craftsmanship,” “essential quality of high poetry,” “splendid and virile,” “among the finest achievements in English poetry,” “most conspicuous achievement of our age,” “sounds depths only possible to a master,” “never been surpassed,” “noble,” “notable,” “felicitous”—we all know them so well that we do not trouble to pay the slightest attention to them.



A certain anecdote relates of a lecturer on modern French poetry that, having mentioned several dozen names, and coming to the end of a page of his manuscript, he announced, in great distress, that he appeared to have lost his next sheet on his way to the lecture, which was unfortunate, as it contained the names (which he could not now recollect) of no less than seventy further poets.

With regard to the poets whom I have intentionally omitted from the body of this book, if they will forgive me, I should like to enumerate some of them here. In many cases the reason for their omission was not necessarily that their works appeared to warrant absolute rejection, but that they did not serve as a component part in my general scheme.

Several, in fact, of the poets discussed have been selected merely in illustration of some point, or some manner, and any dozen of the names which now follow might almost as profitably have been included.

The present popularity of the Anthology is due to the fact, among others, that so many writers of the last twenty or thirty years have produced perhaps only one or two poems worth preserving. These may with advantage figure in anthologies, and the average reader will be glad to read them there, and to be saved the trouble of searching through dozens of volumes of insignificant verse on the off-chance of finding them. It is more than probable that the anthological method of representation will assume a permanent popularity in literature.

If space had permitted a few words might with advantage have been devoted to some of the following :

Sidney Royse Lysaght—Douglas Pepler—Edward Storer—Laurence Housman—Gilbert Frankau—Patrick Macgill—John Helston—Gilbert Cannan—Ronald Campbell Macfie—C. Fox-Smith—James Mackereth—Theodore Maynard—Cecil Roberts—E. H. Visiak—E. Scotton Huelin—T.W. Earp—Herbert Furst—Helen Dircks—Iris Tree—J. Redwood Anderson—Sherard Vines—Margaret Sackville—Ethel Clifford—Rachel Annand Taylor—Sarojini Naidu—Margaret Maitland Radford—Martin Armstrong—Arthur Shearley Cripps—R. L. Gales—John Alford—Charles Williams—Francis Brett Young—Maurice Baring—Edmund Beale Sargant—Robert Calverley Trevelyan—Herbert Asquith—Eva Gore-Booth—Evelyn Underhill—Henry Bryan Binns—Winifred Letts—Douglas Goldring—Muriel Stuart—Irene Rutherford Macleod—Patrick Chalmers—"F. S."—Alec Waugh—Francis Burrows—W. Robert Hall—Godfrey Elton—Eleanor Farjeon—Geoffrey Faber—Robin Flower—V. Locke Ellis—Violet Jacob

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nold—Nancy Campbell—Gerald Crow—
Griffyth Fairfax—Rose Fyleman—Kenneth
Hare—Emilia Stuart Lorimer—E. H. W.
Meyerstein—Viola Meynell—Seumas O’Sulli-
van—Max Plowman—William Kean Sey-
mour—Rawnsley Atkinson Smythe—and
finally Rowbotham, self-styled “The Modern
Homer.”

NOTE AND INDEX

NOTE

THE quotations which occur in the text of this book are extracted from the following works. In each case acknowledgement is due both to the Author and Publisher.

JOHN MASEFIELD: Salt Water Ballads (Elkin Mathews); Ballads and Poems (Elkin Mathews); Lollingdon Downs (Wm. Heinemann); The Daffodil Fields (Wm. Heinemann); Philip the King (Wm. Heinemann); Enslaved (Wm. Heinemann). WALTER DE LA MARE: The Listeners (Constable & Co.); Motley (Constable & Co.); Peacock Pie (Constable & Co.); Poems (Wm. Heinemann); Songs of Childhood (Longmans). RALPH HODGSON: Poems (Macmillan). WILLIAM H. DAVIES: Collected Poems (A. C. Fifield). CHARLOTTE MEW: The Farmer's Bride (Poetry Bookshop). FORD MADDOX HUEFFER: On Heaven (John Lane); Collected Poems (Martin Secker). EZRA POUND: Lustra (Elkin Mathews); Umbra (Elkin Mathews). T. E.

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